



Military History Anniversaries 16 thru 31 May

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

- **May 16 1771 – The Battle of Alamance:** Pre-American Revolutionary War battle between local militia and a group of rebels (The Regulators) occurs in present-day Alamance County, North Carolina. It was a protest against local taxation and corrupt government. Casualties and losses: Militia 9 to 27 killed + 61 wounded – Regulators 9 killed + 7 later executed for treason.
- **May 16 1940 – WW2:** Germany occupies Brussels, Belgium and begins invasion of France.
- **May 16 1943 – The Holocaust:** *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising ends* » In Poland, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising comes to an end as Nazi soldiers gain control of Warsaw’s Jewish ghetto, blowing up the last remaining synagogue and beginning the mass deportation of the ghetto’s remaining dwellers to the Treblinka extermination camp.



Shortly after the German occupation of Poland began, the Nazis forced the city’s Jewish citizens into a “ghetto” surrounded by barbed wire and armed SS guards. The Warsaw Ghetto had an area of only 840 acres but soon held almost 500,000 Jews in deplorable conditions. Disease and starvation killed thousands every month, and beginning in July 1942, 6,000 Jews a day were transferred to the Treblinka concentration camp. Although the Nazis assured the remaining Jews that their relatives and friends were being sent to work camps, word soon reached the ghetto that deportation to the camp meant extermination. An underground resistance group was established in the ghetto—the Jewish Combat Organization (ZOB)—and limited arms were acquired at great cost.

On January 18, 1943, when the Nazis entered the ghetto to prepare a group for transfer, a ZOB unit ambushed them. Fighting lasted for several days, and a number of Germans soldiers were killed before they withdrew. On April 19, Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler announced that the ghetto was to be cleared out in honor of Hitler’s birthday the following day, and more than 1,000 SS soldiers entered the confines with tanks and heavy artillery. Although many of the ghetto’s remaining 60,000 Jewish dwellers attempted to hide themselves in secret bunkers, more than 1,000 ZOB members met the Germans with gunfire and homemade bombs. Suffering moderate casualties, the Germans initially

withdrew but soon returned, and on April 24 they launched an all-out attack against the Warsaw Jews. Thousands were slaughtered as the Germans systematically moved down the ghetto, blowing up buildings one by one. The ZOB took to the sewers to continue the fight, but on May 8 their command bunker fell to the Germans, and their resistant leaders committed suicide. By May 16, the ghetto was firmly under Nazi control, and mass deportation of the last Warsaw Jews to Treblinka began.

During the uprising, some 100 hundred German soldiers were killed to the thousands of Warsaw Jews who perished. Virtually all the former ghetto residents who survived to reach Treblinka were dead by the end of the war. Casualties and losses: Ger 110 – Jews ~16,000 killed + 56,885 deported.

- **May 16 1960 – Cold War:** *U.S.-Soviet summit meeting collapses* » In the wake of the Soviet downing of an American U-2 spy plane on 1 MAY, Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev lashes out at the United States and President Dwight D. Eisenhower at a Paris summit meeting between the two heads of state. Khrushchev's outburst angered Eisenhower and doomed any chances for successful talks or negotiations at the summit.

On May 1, 1960, the Soviets shot down a CIA spy plane and captured the pilot, Gary Francis Powers. The United States issued public denials that the aircraft was being used for espionage, claiming instead that it was merely a weather plane that had veered off course. The Soviets thereupon triumphantly produced Powers, large pieces of wreckage from the plane, and Powers' admission that he was working for the CIA. The incident was a public relations fiasco for Eisenhower, who was forced to admit that the plane had indeed been spying on Russia.



Tensions from the incident were still high when Eisenhower and Khrushchev arrived in Paris to begin a summit meeting on 16 MAY. Khrushchev wasted no time in tearing into the United States, declaring that Eisenhower would not be welcome in Russia during his scheduled visit to the Soviet Union in June. He condemned the “inadmissible, provocative actions” of the United States in sending the spy plane over the Soviet Union, and demanded that Eisenhower ban future flights and punish those responsible for this “deliberate violation of the Soviet Union.” When Eisenhower agreed only to a “suspension” of the spy plane flights, Khrushchev left the meeting in a huff. According to U.S. officials, the president was “furious” at Khrushchev for his public dressing-down of the United States. The summit meeting officially adjourned the next day with no further meetings between Khrushchev and Eisenhower. Eisenhower's planned trip to Moscow in June was scrapped.

The collapse of the May 1960 summit meeting was a crushing blow to those in the Soviet Union and the United States who believed that a period of “peaceful coexistence” between the two superpowers was on the horizon. During the previous few years, both Eisenhower and Khrushchev

had publicly indicated their desire for an easing of Cold War tensions, but the spy plane incident put an end to such talk, at least for the time being.

- **May 16 1965 – Vietnam:** *Accident at Bien Hoa kills 27 U.S. servicemen* » What is described by the United States government as “an accidental explosion of a bomb on one aircraft which spread to others” at the Bien Hoa air base leaves 27 U.S. servicemen and 4 South Vietnamese dead and some 95 Americans injured. More than 40 U.S. and South Vietnamese planes, including 10 B-57s, were destroyed.
- **May 16 1968 – Vietnam:** *Navy Corpsman receives Medal of Honor for action* » Donald E. Ballard, Corpsman U.S. Navy, is awarded the Medal of Honor for action this date in Quang Tri Province. Ballard, from Kansas City, Missouri, was a corpsman with Company M, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, 3rd Marine Division.



He had just finished evacuating two Marines with heatstroke when his unit was surprised by a Viet Cong ambush. Immediately racing to the aid of a casualty, Ballard applied a field dressing and was directing four Marines in the removal of the wounded man when an enemy soldier tossed a grenade into the group. With a warning shout of, “Grenade!” Ballard vaulted over the stretcher and pulled the grenade under his body. The grenade did not go off. Nevertheless, he received the Medal of Honor for his selfless act of courage. Ballard was only the second man whose valor was rewarded despite the fact that the deadly missile did not actually explode.

- **May 16 1972 – Vietnam:** *U.S. bombing destroys main fuel line* » A series of air strikes over five days destroys all of North Vietnam’s pumping stations in the southern panhandle, thereby cutting North Vietnam’s main fuel line to South Vietnam. These strikes were part of Operation Linebacker, an air offensive against North Vietnam that had been ordered by President Richard Nixon in early April in response to a massive communist offensive launched on 30 MAR.

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- **May 17 1863 – Civil War:** *Confederates defeated at the Battle of Big Black River* » The Union army defeats the Confederates on the Big Black River in Mississippi and drives them into Vicksburg in part of a brilliant campaign by General Ulysses S. Grant. The Union leader had swung his army

down the Mississippi River past the strong riverfront defenses, and landed in Mississippi south of Vicksburg. He then moved northeast toward Jackson and split his force to defeat Joseph Johnston's troops in that city and John C. Pemberton's at Champion Hill.



During the engagement at Champion Hill, a Confederate division under William Loring split from Pemberton's main force and drifted south of the battlefield. Pemberton was forced to retreat to the Big Black River where he waited for Loring's troops. Loring, however, was heading east to join Johnston's army because he believed he could not reach Pemberton. While Pemberton waited for Loring on a bridge over the Big Black River, Grant attacked.

Pemberton suffered his second defeat in two days at the Big Black River. The battle began at dawn, and by 10 a.m. the Confederate position appeared hopeless. The Confederates suffered 1,752 troops killed, wounded or captured, while the Yankees had 279 casualties. Pemberton withdrew across the bridge and then burned it down. With the bridge out, Grant could no longer advance. But he now had Pemberton backed up into Vicksburg. He soon closed the ring and laid siege to the town, which surrendered on July 4, 1863.

- **May 17 1970 – Vietnam War:** *Operations continue in Cambodia* » A force of 10,000 South Vietnamese troops, supported by 200 U.S. advisers, aircraft and logistical elements, attack into what was known as the “Parrot’s Beak,” the area of Cambodia that projects into South Vietnam above the Mekong Delta. The South Vietnamese reached the town of Takeo in a 20-mile thrust. This action was part of the ongoing operation ordered by President Richard Nixon in April. U.S. and South Vietnamese forces launched a limited “incursion” into Cambodia that included 13 major ground operations to clear North Vietnamese sanctuaries 20 miles inside the Cambodian border in both the “Parrot’s Beak” and the densely vegetated “Fishhook” area (across the border from South Vietnam, 70 miles from Saigon). Some 50,000 South Vietnamese soldiers and 30,000 U.S. troops were involved, making it the largest operation of the war since Operation Junction City in 1967.



In the United States, news of the incursion set off a wave of antiwar demonstrations, including one at Kent State University that resulted in the killing of four students by Army National Guard troops. Another protest at Jackson State in Mississippi resulted in the shooting of two students when police opened fire on a women's dormitory. The incursion also angered many in Congress who felt that

Nixon was illegally widening the scope of the war; this resulted in a series of congressional resolutions and legislative initiatives that would severely limit the executive power of the president.

- **May 17 1972 – Vietnam War:** *South Vietnamese reinforcements near An Loc* » Preceded by five B-52 strikes, which reportedly killed 300 North Vietnamese to the south, South Vietnamese forces arrive by helicopter to within two miles of An Loc in continuing efforts to relieve this besieged city. It had been surrounded by three North Vietnamese divisions since early April. The North Vietnamese had been holding An Loc under siege for almost three months while they made repeated attempts to take the city. The defenders suffered heavy casualties, including 2,300 dead or missing, but with the aid of U.S. advisors and American airpower, they managed to hold An Loc against vastly superior odds until the siege was finally lifted on 18 JUN.
- **May 17 1987 – Iran*Iraq War:** An Iraqi missile hits the American frigate USS Stark in the Persian Gulf. 37 sailors die.
- **May 17 1990 – Cold War:** *Gorbachev meets with Lithuanian prime minister* » Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev meets with Lithuanian Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskiene in an effort to settle differences arising from Lithuania's recent proclamation of independence from the Soviet Union. For Gorbachev, the meeting was a test of his skill and ability to maintain the crumbling Soviet empire.



Lithuania became part of the Soviet Union after Soviet forces seized it in 1939, and the country remained a Soviet republic for the next 50 years. In 1989, Gorbachev publicly repudiated the so-called Brezhnev doctrine. This doctrine—established in 1968 to justify the Soviet military intervention to put down anti-government protest in Czechoslovakia—allowed the Soviet Union to use force to preserve already existing communist governments in other states. Gorbachev's repudiation was obviously intended to improve relations with Russia's increasingly restless allies in eastern Europe, where anti-government and anticommunist protests were growing. In Lithuania, however, anti-Soviet nationalists took Gorbachev's statement to mean that Russia would not interfere with an independent movement in one of its own republics. On March 11, 1990, Lithuania declared itself an independent republic.

Gorbachev, however, had no intention of allowing republics to break free from the USSR. On 17 MAY, Gorbachev met with Lithuanian Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskiene in Moscow to discuss the situation. Despite optimistic press releases concerning their talks, it quickly became apparent that Lithuania would not back down on its claim to independence. After imposing economic sanctions and threatening military action, the Soviet Union launched a full-scale military assault against Lithuania

in January 1991. The Soviet effort was in vain, however. In December 1991, 11 of the 12 Soviet Socialist Republics (including Lithuania) proclaimed their independence and established the Commonwealth of Independent States. A few weeks later, Gorbachev resigned as president and the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

The Lithuanian-Soviet conflict had a significant impact on U.S.-Soviet relations. Many in the United States were horrified by the January 1991 military Soviet intervention into Lithuania. The U.S. Congress quickly moved to end economic assistance to the Soviet Union. Some U.S. officials also believed that Russia's actions indicated that Gorbachev, despite his talk of reform, was increasingly under the control of hard-liners in the Soviet government.

- **May 17 2006 – U.S. Navy:** The aircraft carrier USS Oriskany is sunk in the Gulf of Mexico as an artificial reef. A Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal team from Panama City, FL detonated C-4 explosive charges of approximately 500 lb (230 kg), strategically placed on 22 sea connection pipes in various machinery spaces. The ship sank stern first 37 minutes after detonation in 210 ft (64 m) of water in the Gulf of Mexico.



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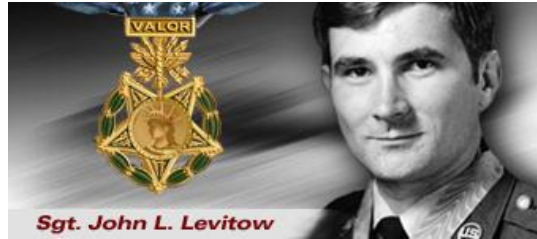
- **May 18 1863 – Civil War:** The 47 day Siege of Vicksburg begins. Casualties and losses: US 4,835 - CSA 32,697.
- **May 18 1917 – WWI:** The Selective Service Act of 1917 is passed, giving the President of the United States the power of conscription.
- **May 18 1943 – WW2:** *Hitler gives the order for Operation Alaric* » Adolf Hitler launches Operation Alaric, the German occupation of Italy in the event its Axis partner either surrendered or switched its allegiance. This operation was considered so top secret that Hitler refused to issue a written order. Instead, he communicated verbally his desire that Field Marshal Erwin Rommel should assemble and ultimately command 11 divisions for the occupation of Italy to prevent an Allied foothold in the peninsula.
- **May 18 1944 – WW2:** *Monte Cassino taken* » The Polish Corps, part of a multinational Allied Eighth Army offensive in southern Italy, finally pushes into Monte Cassino as the battle to break German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring's defensive Gustav Line nears its end. The Allied push northward to Rome began in January with the landing of 50,000 seaborne troops at Anzio, 33 miles south of the Italian capital. Despite having met very little resistance, the Allies chose to consolidate their position rather than immediately battle north to Rome. Consequently, German forces under the

command of Field Marshal Kesselring were able to create a defensive line that cut across the center of the peninsula.



General Wladyslaw Anders, leader of the Polish troops who would raise their flag over the ruins of the famous Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino, commenting on the cost of the battle, said, “Corpses of German and Polish soldiers, sometimes entangled in a deathly embrace, lay everywhere, and the air was full of the stench of rotting bodies.” The 122 day battle ends after seven days of the 4th battle as German paratroopers evacuate. Casualties and losses: Allies 55,000 - Axis ~20,000.

- **May 18 1966 – Vietnam War:** *Laird credibility gap charges* » U.S. Representative Melvin Laird (R-Wisconsin) states that because the Johnson administration is not providing the American public with precise information on planned troop deployments to Vietnam, a “credibility gap” is developing. Informed sources reported that 254,000 U.S. troops were serving in Vietnam, and that another 90,000 were performing tasks directly concerned with the war. These numbers were higher than those provided by the government. This was emblematic of the gap between what the administration said and what it did, leading to a growing distrust of the government among a large part of American society. This mistrust also plagued Johnson’s successor, Richard Nixon, who made Laird his secretary of defense. Like the Johnson administration, Nixon’s administration was marked by attempts to manage the information released about the war. Under Nixon, this included the secret bombing campaign of Cambodia, which was kept from the American public until it was exposed by William Beecher, a military correspondent for the New York Times, in May 1969.
- **May 18 1969 – Vietnam War:** More than 1,500 communist troops attack U.S. and South Vietnamese camps near Xuan Loc, located 38 miles east of Saigon. After five hours of intense fighting, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces were driven off. At the U.S. camp, 14 Americans were killed and 39 wounded; 24 enemy soldiers were killed in the action. At the South Vietnamese camp, 4 South Vietnamese were killed and 14 wounded, with 54 communist soldiers reported killed and 9 captured.
- **May 18 1970 – Vietnam:** *Air Force sergeant awarded Medal of Honor* » At the White House, President Richard Nixon presents Sgt. John L. Levitow with the Medal of Honor for heroic action performed on February 24, 1969, over Long Binh Army Post in South Vietnam.



Then an Airman 1st Class, Levitow was the loadmaster on a Douglas AC-47 gunship. His aircraft had been supporting several Army units that were engaged in battle with North Vietnamese troops when an enemy mortar hit the aircraft's right wing, exploding in the wing frame. Thousands of pieces of shrapnel ripped through the plane's thin skin, wounding four of the crew. Levitow was struck forty times in his right side; although bleeding heavily from these wounds, he threw himself on an activated, smoking magnesium flare, dragged himself and the flare to the open cargo door, and tossed the flare out of the aircraft just before it ignited. For saving his fellow crewmembers and the gunship, Airman Levitow was nominated for the nation's highest award for valor in combat. 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, the first since World War II.

- **May 18 1974 – India:** *India joins the nuclear club* » In the Rajasthan Desert in the state of Pokhran, India successfully detonates its first nuclear weapon, a fission bomb similar in explosive power to the U.S. atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. The test fell on the traditional anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment, and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi received the message "Buddha has smiled" from the exuberant test-site scientists after the detonation. The test, which made India the world's sixth nuclear power, broke the nuclear monopoly of the five members of the U.N. Security Council—the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, China, and France.

India, which suffered continuing border disputes with China, refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968. Fearing a second war with China and a fourth war with Pakistan, India actively sought the development of a nuclear deterrent in the early 1970s. The successful detonation of its first bomb on May 18, 1974, set off an expanded arms race with Pakistan that saw no further nuclear tests but the development of lethal intermediate and long-range ballistic missiles by both countries. On May 11, 1998, India resumed nuclear testing, leading to international outrage and Pakistan's detonation of its first nuclear bomb later in the month.

- **May 18 1989 – Cold War:** *One million protesters take to the streets in Beijing* » A crowd of protesters, estimated to number more than one million, marches through the streets of Beijing calling for a more democratic political system. Just a few weeks later, the Chinese government moved to crush the protests.



Protests in China had been brewing since the mid-1980s when the communist government announced that it was loosening some of the restrictions on the economy, allowing for a freer market to develop. Encouraged by this action, a number of Chinese (particularly students) began to call for similar action on the political front. By early 1989, peaceful protests began to take place in some of China's largest urban areas. The largest of these protests took place around Tiananmen Square in the center of Beijing. By the middle of May 1989, enormous crowds took to the streets with songs, slogans, and banners calling for greater democracy and the ouster of some hard-line Chinese officials. The Chinese government responded with increasingly harsh measures, including arrests and beatings of some protesters. On June 3, 1989, Chinese armed forces stormed into Tiananmen Square and swept the protesters away. Thousands were killed and over 10,000 were arrested in what came to be known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre.

The protests attracted worldwide attention. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev applauded the protesters and publicly declared that reform was necessary in communist China. In the United States, the Chinese students were treated like heroes by the American press. Following the Tiananmen Square Massacre, a shocked U.S. government suspended arms sales to China and imposed economic sanctions. The Chinese government, however, refused to bend, referring to the protesters as "lawless elements" of Chinese society.

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- **May 19 1776 – American Revolution:** A Continental Army garrison surrenders in the Battle of The Cedars.
- **May 19 1848 – Mexican*American War:** Mexico ratifies the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo thus ending the war and ceding California, Nevada, Utah and parts of four other modern-day U.S. states to the United States for US\$15 million.
- **May 19 1864 – Civil War:** *Battle of Spotsylvania concludes* » A dozen days of fighting around Spotsylvania, Virginia, ends with a Confederate attack against the Union forces. The epic campaign between the Army of the Potomac, under the effective direction of Ulysses S. Grant, and Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia began at the beginning of May when Union forces crossed the

Rapidan River. After a bloody two-day battle in the Wilderness forest, Grant moved his army further south toward Spotsylvania Court House. This move was a departure from the tactics of the previous three years in the eastern theater of the Civil War. Since 1861, the Army of the Potomac had been coming down to Virginia under different commanders only to be defeated by the Army of Northern Virginia, usually under Lee's direction, and had always returned northward.



But Grant was different than the other Union generals. He knew that by this time Lee could not sustain constant combat. The numerical superiority of the Yankees would eventually wear Lee down. When Grant ordered his troops to move south, a surge of enthusiasm swept the Union veterans; they knew that in Grant they had an aggressive leader who would not allow the Confederates time to breathe. Nevertheless, the next stop proved to be more costly than the first.

After the battle in the Wilderness, Grant and Lee waged a footrace for the strategic crossroads at Spotsylvania. Lee won the race, and his men dug in. On 8 MAY, Grant attacked Lee, initiating a battle that raged for 12 awful days. The climax came on 12 MAY, when the two armies struggled for nearly 20 hours over an area that became known as the Bloody Angle.

The fighting continued sporadically for the next week as the Yankees tried to eject the Rebels from their breastworks. Finally, when the Confederates attacked on 19 MAY, Grant prepared to pull out of Spotsylvania. Convinced he could never dislodge the Confederates from their positions, he elected to try to circumvent Lee's army to the south. The Army of the Potomac moved, leaving behind 18,000 casualties at Spotsylvania to the Confederates' 12,000. In less than three weeks Grant had lost 33,000 men, with some of the worst fighting yet to come.

- **May 19 1935 – Lawrence of Arabia:** *Thomas Edward Lawrence dies* » Known to the world as Lawrence of Arabia, he died as a retired Royal Air Force mechanic living under an assumed name. The legendary war hero, author, and archaeological scholar succumbed to injuries suffered in a motorcycle accident six days before.



He was born in Tremadoc, Wales, in 1888. In 1896, his family moved to Oxford. Lawrence studied architecture and archaeology, for which he made a trip to Ottoman (Turkish)-controlled Syria and Palestine in 1909. In 1911, he won a fellowship to join an expedition excavating an ancient Hittite settlement on the Euphrates River. He worked there for three years and in his free time traveled and learned Arabic. In 1914, he explored the Sinai, near the frontier of Ottoman-controlled Arabia and British-controlled Egypt. The maps Lawrence and his associates made had immediate strategic value upon the outbreak of war between Britain and the Ottoman Empire in October 1914.

Lawrence enlisted in the war and because of his expertise in Arab affairs was assigned to Cairo as an intelligence officer. He spent more than a year in Egypt, processing intelligence information and in 1916 accompanied a British diplomat to Arabia, where Hussein ibn Ali, the emir of Mecca, had proclaimed a revolt against Turkish rule. Lawrence convinced his superiors to aid Hussein's rebellion, and he was sent to join the Arabian army of Hussein's son Faisal as a liaison officer.

Under Lawrence's guidance, the Arabians launched an effective guerrilla war against the Turkish lines. He proved a gifted military strategist and was greatly admired by the Bedouin people of Arabia. In July 1917, Arabian forces captured Aqaba near the Sinai and joined the British march on Jerusalem. Lawrence was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. In November, he was captured by the Turks while reconnoitering behind enemy lines in Arab dress and was tortured and sexually abused before escaping. He rejoined his army, which slowly worked its way north to Damascus, which fell in October 1918.

Arabia was liberated, but Lawrence's hope that the peninsula would be united as a single nation was dashed when Arabian factionalism came to the fore after Damascus. Lawrence, exhausted and disillusioned, left for England. Feeling that Britain had exacerbated the rivalries between the Arabian groups, he appeared before King George V and politely refused the medals offered to him.

After the war, he lobbied hard for independence for Arab countries and appeared at the Paris peace conference in Arab robes. He became something of a legendary figure in his own lifetime, and in 1922 he gave up higher-paying appointments to enlist in the Royal Air Force (RAF) under an assumed name, John Hume Ross. He had just completed writing his monumental war memoir, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, and he hoped to escape his fame and acquire material for a new book. Found out by the press, he was discharged, but in 1923 he managed to enlist as a private in the Royal Tanks Corps under another assumed name, T.E. Shaw, a reference to his friend, Irish writer George Bernard Shaw. In 1925, Lawrence rejoined the RAF and two years later legally changed his last name to Shaw.

In 1927, an abridged version of his memoir was published and generated tremendous publicity, but the press was unable to locate Lawrence (he was posted to a base in India). In 1929, he returned to England and spent the next six years writing and working as an RAF mechanic. In 1932, his English translation of Homer's *Odyssey* was published under the name of T.E. Shaw. *The Mint*, a fictionalized account of Royal Air Force recruit training, was not published until 1955 because of its explicitness.

In February 1935, Lawrence was discharged from the RAF and returned to his simple cottage at Clouds Hill, Dorset. On 13 MAY, he was critically injured while driving his motorcycle through the

Dorset countryside. He had swerved to avoid two boys on bicycles. On 19 MAY, he died at the hospital of his former RAF camp. All of Britain mourned his passing.

- **May 19 1951 – Korean War:** United Nations forces begin counter offensive in Korea.
- **May 19 1964 – Vietnam War:** *U.S. Air Force begins Operation Yankee Team* » Units of South Vietnam's 9th and 21st Divisions, along with several South Vietnamese airborne battalions, open new stretches of road south of An Loc and come within two miles of the besieged city. In the Central Highlands, North Vietnamese troops, preceded by heavy shelling, tried to break through the lines of South Vietnam's 23rd Division defending Kontum, but the South Vietnamese troops held firm. These actions were part of the North Vietnamese Nguyen Hue Offensive (later called the "Easter Offensive"), a massive invasion by North Vietnamese forces on 30 MAR to strike the blow that would win them the war. The attacking force included 14 infantry divisions and 26 separate regiments, with more than 120,000 troops and approximately 1,200 tanks and other armored vehicles. The main North Vietnamese objectives, in addition to Quang Tri in the north and Kontum in the Central Highlands, included An Loc farther to the south.

Initially, the South Vietnamese defenders were almost overwhelmed, particularly in the northernmost provinces, where they abandoned their positions in Quang Tri and fled south in the face of the enemy onslaught. At Kontum and An Loc, the South Vietnamese were more successful in defending against the attacks, but only after weeks of bitter fighting. Although the defenders suffered heavy casualties, they managed to hold their own with the aid of U.S. advisors and American airpower. Fighting continued all over South Vietnam into the summer months, but eventually the South Vietnamese forces prevailed against the invaders and retook Quang Tri in September. With the communist invasion blunted, President Nixon declared that the South Vietnamese victory proved the viability of his Vietnamization program, which he had instituted in 1969 to increase the combat capability of the South Vietnamese armed forces.

- **May 19 1967 – Vietnam War:** U.S. planes bomb Hanoi for the first time.
- **May 19 1967 – Cold War:** *Soviets ratify treaty banning nuclear weapons from outer space* » One of the first major treaties designed to limit the spread of nuclear weapons goes into effect as the Soviet Union ratifies an agreement banning nuclear weapons from outer space. The United States, Great Britain, and several dozen other nations had already signed and/or ratified the treaty.

With the advent of the so-called "space race" between the United States and the Soviet Union, which had begun in 1957 when the Russians successfully launched the Sputnik satellite, some began to fear that outer space might be the next frontier for the expansion of nuclear weapons. To forestall that eventuality, an effort directed by the United Nations came to fruition in January 1967 when the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and dozens of other nations signed off on a treaty banning nuclear weapons from outer space. The agreement also banned nations from using the moon, other planets, or any other "celestial bodies" as military outposts or bases.

The agreement was yet another step toward limiting nuclear weapons. In 1959, dozens of nations, including the United States and the Soviet Union, had agreed to ban nuclear weapons from Antarctica. In July 1963, the Limited Test Ban Treaty was signed, banning open-air and underwater

nuclear tests. With the action taken in May 1967, outer space was also officially declared off-limits for nuclear weapons.

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- **May 20 1864 – Civil War:** Battle of Ware Bottom Church – in the Virginia Bermuda Hundred Campaign, 10,000 troops fight in this Confederate victory. Combined casualties ~1500.
- **May 20 1902 – Latin America Interventions:** U.S. military occupation of Cuba (since Jan 1, 1899 ends).
- **May 20 1940 – WW2:** The Holocaust - The first prisoners arrive at a new concentration camp at Auschwitz.



- **May 20 1940 – WW2:** *Germans break through to English Channel at Abbeville, France* » In reaching Abbeville, German armored columns, led by General Heinz Guderian (a tank expert), severed all communication between the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in the north and the main French army in the south. He also cut off the Force from its supplies in the west. The Germans now faced the sea, England in sight. Winston Churchill was prepared for such a pass, having already made plans for the withdrawal of the BEF (the BEF was a home-based army force that went to northern France at the start of both World Wars in order to support the French armies) and having called on the British Admiralty to prepare “a large number of vessels” to cross over to France if necessary. With German tanks at the Channel, Churchill prepared for a possible invasion of England itself, approving a plan to put into place gun posts and barbed wire roadblocks to protect government offices in Whitehall as well as the prime minister’s dwelling, 10 Downing Street.
- **May 20 1941 – WW2:** *Battle of Crete* » The Battle was fought from May 20 to June 1, 1941. It saw the Germans make large-scale use of paratroopers during the invasion. Though a victory, the Battle of Crete dubbed Operation Mercury saw these forces sustain such high losses that they were not used again by the Germans.

On the morning of May 20, 1941, Major General Kurt Student's aircraft began arriving over their drop zones. Departing their aircraft, the German paratroopers met fierce resistance upon landing. Their situation was worsened by German airborne doctrine, which called for their personal weapons

to be dropped in a separate container. Armed with only pistols and knives, many German paratroopers were cut down as they moved to recover their rifles. Beginning around 8:00 AM, New Zealand forces defending Maleme airfield inflicted staggering losses on the Germans.



German paratroopers land in Crete, May 1941.

Those Germans arriving by glider fared little better as they immediately came under attack as they left their aircraft. While attacks against Maleme airfield were repulsed, the Germans succeeded in forming defensive positions to the west and east towards Chania. As the day progressed, German forces landed near Rethymnon and Heraklion. As in the west, losses during the opening engagements were high. Rallying, German forces near Heraklion managed to penetrate the city but were driven back by Greek troops. Near Maleme, German troops gathered and began attacks against Hill 107, which dominated the airfield.

Though the New Zealanders were able to hold the hill through the day, an error led to their being withdrawn during the night. As a result, the Germans occupied the hill and swiftly gained control of the airfield. This permitted the arrival of elements of the 5th Mountain Division though Allied forces heavily shelled the airfield, causing significant losses in aircraft and men. As fighting continued ashore on 21 MAY, the Royal Navy successfully dispersed a reinforcement convoy that night. Quickly understanding the full importance of Maleme, Freyberg ordered attacks against Hill 107 that night.

These were unable to dislodge the Germans and the Allies fell back. With the situation desperate, King George II of Greece was moved across the island and evacuated to Egypt. In the fighting for Crete, the Allies suffered around 4,000 killed, 1,900 wounded, and 17,000 captured. The campaign also cost the Royal Navy 9 ships sunk and 18 damaged. German losses totaled 4,041 dead/missing, 2,640 wounded, 17 captured, and 370 aircraft destroyed.

- **May 20 1951 – Korean War:** U.S. Air Force Captain James Jabara becomes the first jet air ace in history.
- **May 20 1953 – Vietnam:** *French see “light at the end of the tunnel” in Vietnam* » Using a phrase that will haunt Americans in later years—“Now we can see [success in Vietnam] clearly, like light at the end of a tunnel”—Gen. Henri Navarre assumes command of French Union Forces in Vietnam. The French had been fighting a bloody war against communist insurgents in Vietnam since 1946. The insurgents, the Viet Minh, were fighting for independence and the French were trying to reassert their colonial rule in Indochina.



Upon assumption of command, Navarre addressed himself to the grave deterioration of the French military position, particularly in the North, by advancing a plan for a buildup of French forces preparatory to a massive attack against the Viet Minh. He received more support from U.S. Secretary of State John F. Dulles in Washington than he did from Paris, but his operations during the summer only underscored the inadequacy of French military means and French inability to deal with Viet Minh tactics. Ultimately, the French were decisively defeated by the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954.

When the Americans took over the role of stopping communism in South Vietnam, they ran into the same kind of military problems that had plagued the French. Nevertheless, there was a widespread feeling that the United States would not make the same mistakes that the French had. In late 1967, Gen. William Westmoreland, commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, used similar language to Navarre's when he asserted that the U.S. "had turned the corner in the war." His credibility was seriously damaged on January 29, 1968, when the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese launched a massive attack that became known as the Tet Offensive. Conditioned by Westmoreland's overly optimistic assessments of the war's progress, many Americans were stunned that the communists could launch such a ferocious attack. In the end, the communists were defeated on the battlefield, but achieved a great psychological victory that caused many in America to question the wisdom of continuing U.S. involvement in the war.

- **May 20 1956 – Cold War:** Operation Redwing - The first United States airborne hydrogen bomb is dropped over Bikini Atoll in the Pacific Ocean in a series of 17 nuclear test detonations from May to July 1956. The entire operation followed Project 56 and preceded Project 57. The primary intention was to test new, second-generation thermonuclear weapons. Also tested were fission devices intended to be used as primaries for thermonuclear weapons, and small tactical weapons for air defense. Redwing demonstrated the first United States airdrop of a deliverable hydrogen bomb during test Cherokee. Because the yields for many tests at Operation Castle in 1954 were dramatically higher than predictions, Redwing was conducted using an "energy budget": There were limits to the total amount of energy released, and the amount of fission yield was also strictly controlled. Fission, primarily "fast" fission of the natural uranium tamper surrounding the fusion capsule, greatly increases the yield of thermonuclear devices, and constitutes the great majority of the fallout, as nuclear fusion is a relatively clean reaction.



- **May 20 1969 – Vietnam: *Battle for Hamburger Hill ends*** » After 10 days and 10 bloody assaults, Hill 937 in South Vietnam is finally captured by U.S. and South Vietnamese troops. The Americans who fought there cynically dubbed Hill 937 “Hamburger Hill” because the battle and its high casualty rate reminded them of a meat grinder.



Located one mile east of the Laotian border, Hill 937 was ordered taken as part of Operation Apache Snow, a mission intended to limit enemy infiltration from Laos that threatened Hue to the northeast and Danang to the southeast. On May 10, following air and artillery strikes, a U.S.-led infantry force launched its first assault on the North Vietnamese stronghold but suffered a high proportion of casualties and fell back. Ten more infantry assaults came during the next 10 days, but Hill 937's North Vietnamese defenders did not give up their fortified position until 20 MAY. Almost 100 Americans were killed and more than 400 wounded in taking the hill, amounting to a shocking 70 percent casualty rate.

The same day that Hamburger Hill was finally captured, Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts called the operation “senseless and irresponsible” and attacked the military tactics of President Richard Nixon’s administration. His speech before the Senate was seen as part of a growing public outcry over the U.S. military policy in Vietnam. U.S. military command had ordered Hill 937 taken primarily as a diversionary tactic, and on 28 MAY it was abandoned. This led to further outrage in America over what seemed a senseless loss of American lives. North Vietnamese forces eventually returned and re-fortified their original position. Casualties and losses: US 444 - NVN 678.

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- **May 21 1863 – Civil War:** The Union Army succeeds in closing off the last escape route from Port Hudson, Louisiana, in preparation for the coming siege.
- **May 21 1864 – Civil War:** The 13 day Battle of Spotsylvania Court House ends. Casualties and losses: US 18,399 - CSA 13,421.
- **May 21 1940 – WW2:** *Nazis kill “unfit” people in East Prussia* » A “special unit” carries out its mission-and murders more than 1,500 hospital patients in East Prussia. Mentally ill patients from throughout East Prussia had been transferred to the district of Soldau, also in East Prussia. A special military unit, basically a hit squad, carried out its agenda and killed the patients over an 18-day period, one small part of the larger Nazi program to exterminate everyone deemed “unfit” by its ideology. After the murders, the unit reported back to headquarters in Berlin that the patients had been “successfully evacuated.”
- **May 21 1941 – WW2:** *First U.S. ship sunk by a German U-boat* » Before dawn on 21 MAY, before U.S. entered into war with Germany, the German U-boat U-69 stopped the SS Robin Moore. A hog islander steamship sailing under an American ship, and after speaking with the freighter’s officers, announced the *Robin Moor* would be sunk, and gave the crew and passengers a few minutes to launch the ship’s lifeboats. The submarine then torpedoed and shelled the hapless freighter, and departed, leaving four lifeboats with some eight passengers and thirty-eight merchant seamen to fend for themselves in the middle of the ocean.



Three of those lifeboats were picked up after fourteen grueling days, and the survivors taken to Cape Town, South Africa. The fourth lifeboat was picked up after eighteen days and taken to Recife, Brazil. Remarkably, nobody died in the incident, although one young mariner tragically committed suicide while on his way home.

- **May 21 1942 – WW2:** *Thousands of Jews die in Nazi gas chambers* » Jews, 4,300 of them, are deported from the Polish town of Chelm to the Nazi extermination camp at Sobibor, where all are gassed to death. On the same day, the German firm IG Farben sets up a factory just outside Auschwitz, in order to take advantage of Jewish slave laborers from the Auschwitz concentration camps.



Sobibor had five gas chambers, where about 250,000 Jews were killed between 1942 and 1943. A camp revolt occurred in October 1943; 300 Jewish slave laborers rose up and killed several members of the SS as well as Ukrainian guards. The rebels were killed as they battled their captors or tried to escape. The remaining prisoners were executed the very next day.

IG Farben, as well as exploiting Jewish slave labor for its oil and rubber production, also performed drug experiments on inmates. Tens of thousands of prisoners would ultimately die because of brutal work conditions and the savagery of the guards. Several of the firm's officials would be convicted of "plunder," "spoliation of property," "imposing slave labor," and "inhumane treatment" of civilians and POWs after the war. The company itself came under Allied control. The original goal was to dismantle its industries, which also included the manufacture of chemicals and pharmaceuticals, so as to prevent it from ever posing a threat "to Germany's neighbors or to world peace." But as time passed, the resolve weakened, and the Western powers broke the company up into three separate divisions: Hoechst, Bayer, and BASF.

- **May 21 1951 – Korean War:** The U.S. Eighth Army counterattacks to drive the Communist Chinese and North Koreans out of South Korea.
- **May 21 1969 – Vietnam:** *Military spokesman defends "Hamburger Hill"* » A U.S. military command spokesman in Saigon defends the battle for Ap Bia Mountain as having been necessary to stop enemy infiltration and protect the city of Hue. The spokesman stated that the battle was an integral part of the policy of "maximum pressure" that U.S. forces had been pursuing for the prior six months, and confirmed that no orders had been received from President Nixon to modify that basic strategy. On 20 MAY, the battle, described in the American media as the battle for "Hamburger Hill," had come under attack in Congress from Senator Kennedy (D-Massachusetts), who described the action as "senseless and irresponsible."

On 22 MAY in Phu Bai, South Vietnam, Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division that took "Hamburger Hill," responded to continuing media criticism by saying that his orders had been "to destroy enemy forces" in the A Shau Valley and that he had not received any other orders to reduce casualties by avoiding battles.

The battle in question had occurred as part of Operation Apache Snow in the A Shau Valley. During that operation, which had begun on May 10, paratroopers had engaged a North Vietnamese regiment on the slopes of Hill 937, known to the Vietnamese as Ap Bia Mountain. Entrenched in prepared fighting positions, the North repulsed the initial American assault and on 14 MAY, beat back another attempt by the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry. An intense battle raged for the next 10 days

as the mountain came under heavy Allied air strikes, artillery barrages, and 10 infantry assaults. On 20 MAY, Maj. Gen. Zais sent in two additional U.S. airborne battalions and a South Vietnamese battalion as reinforcements. The communist stronghold was finally captured in the 11th attack when the American and South Vietnamese soldiers fought their way to the summit of the mountain. In the face of the four-battalion attack, the North Vietnamese retreated to sanctuary areas in Laos.

During the intense fighting, 597 North Vietnamese were reported killed and U.S. casualties were 56 killed and 420 wounded. Due to the bitter fighting and the high loss of life, the battle for Ap Bia Mountain received widespread unfavorable publicity in the United States and was dubbed “Hamburger Hill” in the U.S. media, a name evidently derived from the fact that the battle turned into a “meat grinder.” Since the operation was not intended to hold territory but rather to keep the North Vietnamese Army off balance, the mountain was abandoned soon after the battle and was occupied by the North Vietnamese a month later.

The news of the battle resulted in widespread public outrage over what appeared to be a senseless loss of American lives. The situation was exacerbated by pictures published in Life magazine of 241 U.S. soldiers killed during the week of the battle. Subsequently, Gen. Creighton Abrams, commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, was ordered to avoid such battles. Because of Hamburger Hill, and other battles like it, U.S. emphasis was placed on “Vietnamization” (turning the war over to the South Vietnamese forces), rather than direct combat operations.

- **May 22 1988 – Cold War:** *Gorbachev consolidates power* » In an attempt to consolidate his own power and ease political and ethnic tensions in the Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev dismisses the Communist Party leaders in those two republics.



Since coming to power in 1985, Gorbachev had faced numerous problems with his efforts to bring about domestic reform in the Soviet Union. First and foremost was the opposition by more conservative Russian officials, who believed that Gorbachev’s economic and political reforms might threaten the position of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. Both Karen S. Demirchyan and Kyamran I. Bagirov, heads of the Communist Party in Armenia and Azerbaijan respectively, fell into this group—Gorbachev had publicly complained about his frustrations in bringing about economic reform in the two republics. The second major problem faced by the Soviet leader was the rising tide of ethnic unrest in several Russian republics. In the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the unrest spilled across their borders, with Azerbaijanis and Armenians trading charges about mistreatment at the hands of the other. Neither Demirchyan nor Bagirov seemed capable of dealing with the situation.

Gorbachev thus decided to kill two birds with one stone, and on May 21, announced that both men were being removed from their positions for “reasons of health.” They were quickly replaced with men handpicked by Gorbachev.

Gorbachev’s action was only a temporary solution to the problems. During the next three years, the slow pace of reform in the Soviet Union could not keep up with the rapidly crumbling economy and increasingly factionalized political system. And ethnic tensions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and other Soviet republics continued unabated, sometimes exploding into violence. By 1991, it was clear that the Soviet Union was falling apart. In December, Gorbachev resigned as president and the Soviet Union soon thereafter ceased to exist as a nation.

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- **May 22 1863 – Civil War:** Siege of Port Hudson – Union forces begin to lay siege to the Confederate-controlled Port Hudson, Louisiana.
- **May 22 1864 – Civil War:** After ten weeks, the Union Army's Red River Campaign ends with the Union unable to achieve any of its objectives. Casualties and losses: US 5,500 - CSA 4,300.
- **May 22 1871 – Indian Wars:** The U.S. Army issued an order for abandonment of Fort Kearny in Nebraska. The fort had been utilized mostly as a supply post, and not as defensive position in the Indian Wars.
- **May 22 1917 – WW1:** *Crisis in Austria-Hungary* » With hunger and discontent spreading among the civilian and military populations of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a crisis mounts within its government, as Hungarian Prime Minister Istvan Tisza resigns at the request of the Austrian emperor, Karl I, on May 22, 1917.



Istvan Tisza



Karl I

A great power in decline when World War I broke out in 1914, Austria-Hungary was a predominately agricultural society but was not agriculturally self-sufficient. The war had cut off the empire’s two main sources of food, Russia and Romania, and the military effort cut domestic production significantly: by 1917, Austria’s output of wheat had fallen to less than half of its 1913 total, and that of rye and oats had fallen even more. To make matters worse, Hungary—Austria’s less

powerful partner in the so-called Dual Monarchy—had closed its frontier with Austria in 1914 and ceased to consider its agricultural produce as a common resource, choosing instead to sell whatever surplus it had to the army and to Germany. Defeat on the battlefield against Russia in the first years of war forced Austria-Hungary to rely heavily on its ally, Germany, to keep them in the war effort, and the Italian entrance into the war in 1915 forced the Austrians to fight on yet another front, to the south.

On November 21, 1916, Emperor Franz Josef died; he was succeeded by his great-nephew, Karl I, who assumed supreme command of the army, dismissing longtime chief of the general staff, Conrad von Hotzendorff. Though the new emperor promised to institute reforms and build consensus within the Dual Monarchy, his efforts led initially to disorder and dissent. Karl's liberalism posed a direct challenge to the Hungarian government and its prime minister, Ivan Tisza. His reformist opposition within Hungary, Party of Independence, led by Mihaly Karolyi, favored a total break with Austria when the compromise between the two nations came up for renewal in 1917.

Socialists and revolutionaries supported Karolyi, who organized major demonstrations in Budapest on May 1, 1917. Meanwhile, though he had urged restraint in 1914, Tisza was by now associated in the mind of the Hungarian public with the aggressive prosecution of a war effort many had come to see as hopeless, and had begun to lose much-needed support. At the emperor's request, he tendered his resignation on May 22, 1917. He was succeeded by Moritz Esterhazy, who expressed his desire to build "Hungarian democracy"; the new deal between Austria and Hungary, signed in December, would last just two years, not the expected 20. Still blamed for the continued war effort, and its impending failure, Tisza was assassinated on October 31, 1918, by Magyar members of the Communist Red Guard.

Meanwhile, barely a week after Tisza's resignation in May 1917, Austria-Hungary experienced the first of a series of mutinies within its army. Led by nationalist groups, the first mutiny involved a group of Slovenes; no sooner had it been suppressed than others broke out, led by Serbs, Rusyns (or Ruthenians) and Czechs.

- **May 22 1939 – WW2:** *The Pact of Steel is signed; the Axis is formed* » Italy and Germany agree to a military and political alliance, giving birth formally to the Axis powers, which will ultimately include Japan.



Mussolini coined the nickname "Pact of Steel" (he had also come up with the metaphor of an "axis" binding Rome and Berlin) after reconsidering his first choice, "Pact of Blood," to describe this

historic agreement with Germany. The Duce saw this partnership as not only a defensive alliance, protection from the Western democracies, with whom he anticipated war, but also a source of backing for his Balkan adventures. Both sides were fearful and distrustful of the other, and only sketchily shared their prospective plans. The result was both Italy and Germany, rather than acting in unison, would often “react” to the precipitate military action of the other. In September 1940, the Pact of Steel would become the Tripartite Pact, with Japan making up the third constituent of the triad.

- **May 22 1942 – WW2:** Mexico enters World War II on the side of the Allies after German submarines attacked two Mexican oil tankers. Some 300,000 Mexican citizens went to the U.S. to work in factories that produced war supplies and to help in any way that would benefit the Allies.
- **May 22 1942 – WW2:** Ted Williams of the Boston Red Sox enlists in the United States Marine Corps as a flight instructor.
- **May 22 1944 – WW2:** Anzio Beachhead, Italy - Allied forces, including elements of three National Guard divisions—the 34th (IA, MN, ND), 36th (TX) and 45th (AZ, CO, OK)—begin their final push to break out of the besieged positions just south of Rome for four months. The breakout would be completed on May 31, with the Allies entering Rome on June 5.
- **May 22 1944 – WW2:** *Operation Chattanooga Choo-Choo is launched* » U.S. and British aircraft begin a systematic bombing raid on railroads in Germany and other parts of northern Europe, called Operation Chattanooga Choo-Choo. The operation is a success; Germany is forced to scramble for laborers, including foreign slave laborers, to repair the widespread damage exacted on its railway network.
- **May 22 1945 – WW2:** - United States Army Major Robert B. Staver recommends that the U.S. evacuate German scientists and engineers to help in the development of rocket technology.



104 German rocket scientists from Operation Paperclip

- **May 22 1947 – Cold War:** In an effort to fight the spread of Communism, U.S. President Harry S. Truman signs an act into law that will later be called the Truman Doctrine. The act grants \$400 million in military and economic aid to Turkey and Greece, each battling an internal Communist movement.

- **May 22 1964 – Vietnam War:** *Rusk warns North Vietnamese* » In a major speech before the American Law Institute in Washington, D.C., Secretary of State Dean Rusk explicitly accuses North Vietnam of initiating and directing the aggression in South Vietnam. U.S. withdrawal, said Rusk, “would mean not only grievous losses to the free world in Southeast and Southern Asia but a drastic loss of confidence in the will and capacity of the free world.” He concluded: “There is a simple prescription for peace—leave your neighbors alone.” In the fall, there was incontrovertible evidence that North Vietnamese regular troops were moving down the Ho Chi Minh Trail to join the Viet Cong in their war against the Saigon government and its forces.



Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Thailand mobilized its border provinces against incursions by the communist Pathet Lao forces from Laos and agreed to the use of bases by the U.S. Air Force for reconnaissance, search and rescue, and even attacks against the Pathet Lao. By the end of the year, some 75 U.S. aircraft would be based in Thailand to assist in operations against the Pathet Lao. Eventually, Thailand permitted the United States to use its air bases for operations against the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese in South Vietnam, and ultimately to launch bombing raids against North Vietnam. In addition, Thailand sent combat troops to South Vietnam, numbering 11,000 at the height of the Thai commitment.

- **May 22 1967 – Vietnam War:** Vinh Xuan massacre conducted by South Korean forces resulted in the deaths of at least 15 unarmed women and children, and old men who refused to leave their villages.
- **May 22 1968 – U.S. Navy:** Last radio message received from USS Scorpion (SSN-589). Declared lost 6 JUN. Cause not ascertainable; most probable inadvertent activation of battery of torpedo resulting in a possible "hot run" torpedo detonation off Azores. 99 died.
- **May 22 1969 – Vietnam War:** *Negotiators differ on diplomatic exchange* » Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, at the 18th plenary session of the Paris peace talks, says he finds common ground for discussion in the proposals of President Richard Nixon and the National Liberation Front. In reply, Nguyen Thanh Le, spokesman for the North Vietnamese, said the programs were “as different as day and night.”

At the 16th plenary session of the Paris talks on 8 MAY, the National Liberation Front had presented a 10-point program for an “overall solution” to the war. This proposal included an unconditional withdrawal of United States and Allied troops from Vietnam; the establishment of a coalition government and the holding of free elections; the demand that the South Vietnamese settle

their own affairs “without foreign interference”; and the eventual reunification of North and South Vietnam.



Henry Cabot Lodge & Nguyen Thanh Le

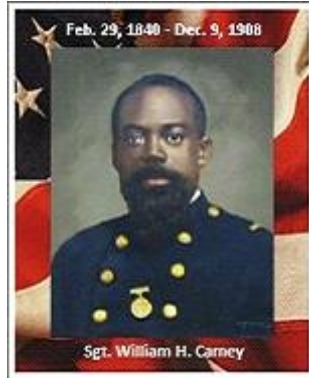
In a speech to the American public on 14 MAY, President Nixon responded to the communist plan with a proposal of his own. He proposed a phased, mutual withdrawal of major portions of U.S. Allied and North Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam over a 12-month period. The remaining non-South Vietnamese forces would withdraw to enclaves and abide by a cease-fire until withdrawals were completed. Nixon also insisted that North Vietnamese forces withdraw from Cambodia and Laos at the same time and offered internationally supervised elections for South Vietnam. Nixon’s offer of a “simultaneous start on withdrawal” represented a revision of the last formal proposal offered by the Johnson administration in October 1966. In the earlier proposal, known as the “Manila formula,” the United States stated that the withdrawal of U.S. forces would be completed within six months after the North Vietnamese left South Vietnam.

In the end, Nguyen Thanh Le’s observation was on target. The communists’ proposal and Nixon’s counteroffer were very different and there was, in fact, almost no common ground. Neither side relented and nothing meaningful came from this diplomatic exchange.

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- **May 23 1846 – Mexican*American War:** President Mariano Paredes of Mexico unofficially declares war on the United States.
- **May 23 1900 – Post Civil War:** *Forgotten Civil War hero honored* » Sergeant William Harvey Carney is awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his bravery on July 18, 1863, while fighting for the Union cause as a member of the 54th Massachusetts Colored Infantry. He was the first African American to receive the Medal of Honor, which is the nation’s highest military honor.

The 54th Massachusetts, formed in early 1863, served as the prototype for African American regiments in the Union army. On July 16, 1863, the regiment saw its first action at James Island, South Carolina, performing admirably in a confrontation with experienced Confederate troops. Three days later, the 54th volunteered to lead the assault on Fort Wagner, a highly fortified outpost on Morris Island that was part of the Confederate defense of Charleston Harbor.



Struggling against a lethal barrage of cannon and rifle fire, the regiment fought their way to the top of the fort's parapet over several hours. Sergeant William Harvey Carney was wounded there while planting the U.S. flag. The regiment's white commander, Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, was killed, and his soldiers were overwhelmed by the fort's defenders and had to fall back. Despite his wound, Carney refused to retreat until he removed the flag, and though successful, he was shot again in the process. The 54th lost 281 of its 600 men in its brave attempt to take Fort Wagner, which throughout the war never fell by force of arms. The 54th went on to perform honorably in expeditions in Georgia and Florida, most notably at the Battle of Olustee. Carney eventually recovered and was discharged with disability on June 30, 1864.

- **May 23 1939 – U.S. Navy:** USS Squalus (SS-192) foundered in a test dive off Portsmouth, New Hampshire. 26 died. The remaining 33 were rescued the next day.
- **May 23 1915 – WWI:** Italy joins the Allies after they declare war on Austria-Hungary.
- **May 23 1941 – WW2:** *Lord Mountbatten, cousin to a king, sunk by German dive-bombers* » Captain Lord Louis Mountbatten, second cousin of King George VI of Britain and the only man other than the king to hold rank in all three military services simultaneously, is among those thrown into the Mediterranean Sea when his destroyer, the HMS Kelly, is sunk.



Mountbatten's ship was among several British cruisers, destroyers, and battleships sunk off Crete by German dive-bombers. The Kelly was attacked by 24 bombers alone; 130 crewmembers were killed. Mountbatten was still on the bridge of the ship when it finally flipped over; nevertheless, he managed to swim to shore and take control of the rescue operation. He would ultimately accept, as senior Allied officer present, the surrender of Japanese land forces within Southeast Asia by General Sieshiro Itagaki.

Mountbatten survived the terror of war against the Axis powers, only to be killed by an Irish Republic Army bomb, planted on his boat, on August 26, 1979.

Side note: Just a day before the sinking of the Kelly, the battleship Valiant was damaged but not sunk during an equally vicious German air attack, also off Crete, which succeeded in sinking two cruisers and four destroyers. Among the crewmen of the Valiant was Lord Mountbatten's nephew, Prince Philip of Greece.

- **May 23 1945 – WW2:** *Himmler commits suicide* » Heinrich Himmler, chief of the SS, assistant chief of the Gestapo, and architect of Hitler's program to exterminate European Jews, commits suicide one day after being arrested by the British.



As head of the Waffen-Schutzstaffel (“Armed Black Shirts”), the military arm of the Nazi Party, and assistant chief of the Gestapo (the secret police), Himmler was able over time to consolidate his control over all police forces of the Reich. The power he would ultimately wield would rival that of the German army; it would also prove highly effective in eliminating all opposition to Hitler and the party, as well as in carrying out the Fuhrer's Final Solution. It was Himmler who organized the creation of death camps throughout Eastern Europe and a pool of slave laborers.

Himmler's megalomania, which included a plan to surrender to the Western Allies late in the war in order to pursue the fight against Russia unimpeded, caused Hitler to strip him of all his offices and order his arrest. Himmler attempted to slip out of Germany disguised as a soldier, but was caught by the British. He swallowed a cyanide capsule a day later. Himmler has been portrayed in many films, including *The Eagle Has Landed*, with Donald Pleasance as Himmler.

- **May 23 1945 – WW2:** The short lived Flensburg Government formed after the suicide of Adolf Hitler to rule Germany under Reichspräsident Karl Dönitz is dissolved when its members are captured and arrested by British forces at Flensburg in Northern Germany.
- **May 23 1945 – WW2:** *Eichmann captured* » Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion announces to the world that Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann has been captured and will stand trial in Israel. Eichmann, the Nazi SS officer who organized Adolf Hitler's “final solution of the Jewish question,” was seized by Israeli agents in Argentina on May 11 and smuggled to Israel nine days later.



Eichmann was born in Solingen, Germany, in 1906. In November 1932, he joined the Nazi's elite SS (Schutzstaffel) organization, whose members came to have broad responsibilities in Nazi Germany, including policing, intelligence, and the enforcement of Adolf Hitler's anti-Semitic policies. Eichmann steadily rose in the SS hierarchy, and with the German annexation of Austria in 1938, he was sent to Vienna with the mission of ridding the city of Jews. He set up an efficient Jewish deportment center and in 1939 was sent to Prague on a similar mission. That year, Eichmann was appointed to the Jewish section of the SS central security office in Berlin.

In January 1942, Eichmann met with top Nazi officials at the Wannsee Conference near Berlin for the purpose of planning a "final solution of the Jewish question," as Nazi leader Hermann Goring put it. The Nazis decided to exterminate Europe's Jewish population. Eichmann was appointed to coordinate the identification, assembly, and transportation of millions of Jews from occupied Europe to the Nazi death camps, where Jews were gassed or worked to death. He carried this duty out with horrifying efficiency, and between three to four million Jews perished in the extermination camps before the end of World War II. Close to 2 million were executed elsewhere.

Following the war, Eichmann was captured by U.S. troops, but he escaped the prison camp in 1946 before having to face the Nuremberg International War Crimes Tribunal. Eichmann traveled under an assumed identity between Europe and the Middle East and in 1950 arrived in Argentina, which maintained lax immigration policies and was a safe haven for many Nazi war criminals. In 1957, a German prosecutor secretly informed Israel that Eichmann was living in Argentina. Agents from Israel's intelligence service, the Mossad, were deployed to Argentina, and in early 1960 they finally located Eichmann. He was living in the San Fernando section of Buenos Aires, under the name Ricardo Klement.

In May 1960, Argentina was celebrating the 150th anniversary of its revolution against Spain, and many tourists were traveling to Argentina from abroad to attend the festivities. The Mossad used the opportunity to smuggle more agents into the country. Israel, knowing that Argentina might never extradite Eichmann for trial, had decided to abduct him and take him to Israel illegally. On May 11, Mossad operatives descended on Garibaldi Street in San Fernando and snatched Eichmann away as he was walking from the bus to his home. His family called local hospitals but not the police, and Argentina knew nothing of the operation. On May 20, a drugged Eichmann was flown out of Argentina disguised as an Israeli airline worker who had suffered head trauma in an accident. Three days later, Prime Minister Ben-Gurion announced that Eichmann was in Israeli custody.

Argentina demanded Eichmann's return, but Israel argued that his status as an international war criminal gave it the right to proceed with a trial. On April 11, 1961, Eichmann's trial began in Jerusalem. It was the first trial to be televised in history. Eichmann faced 15 charges, including crimes against humanity, crimes against the Jewish people, and war crimes. He claimed he was just following orders, but the judges disagreed, finding him guilty on all counts on December 15 and sentencing him to die. On May 31, 1962, he was hanged near Tel Aviv. His body was subsequently cremated and his ashes thrown into the sea.

- **May 23 1967 – Vietnam War:** *Congressman claims M-16 is defective* » A public controversy over the M-16, the basic combat rifle in Vietnam, begins after Representative James J. Howard (D-New Jersey) reads a letter to the House of Representatives in which a Marine in Vietnam claims that almost all Americans killed in the battle for Hill 881 died as a result of their new M-16 rifles jamming. The Defense Department acknowledged on 28 AUG that there had been a “serious increase in frequency of malfunctions in the M-16.”



The M-16 had become the standard U.S. infantry rifle in Vietnam earlier in 1967, replacing the M-14. Almost two pounds lighter and five inches shorter than the M-14, but with the same effective range of over 500 yards, it fired a smaller, lighter 5.56-mm cartridge. The M-16 could be fired fully automatic (like a machine gun) or one shot at a time.

Because the M-16 was rushed into mass production, early models were plagued by stoppages that caused some units to request a reissue of the M-14. Technical investigation revealed a variety of causes for the defect, in both the weapon and ammunition design, and in care and cleaning in the field. With these deficiencies corrected, the M-16 became a popular infantry rifle that was able to hold its own against the Soviet-made AK-47 assault rifle used by the enemy.

- **May 23 1971 – Vietnam War:** *North Vietnamese infiltrators attack U.S. base* » North Vietnamese demolition experts infiltrate the major U.S. air base at Cam Ranh Bay, blowing up six tanks of aviation fuel, which resulted in the loss of about 1.5 million gallons. U.S. commander Creighton Abrams criticized the inadequate security.
- **May 23 1972 – Vietnam War:** *United States widens aerial campaign* » Heavy U.S. air attacks that began with an order by President Richard Nixon on 8 MAY are widened to include more industrial and non-military sites. In 190 strikes, the United States lost one plane but shot down four. The new strikes were part of the ongoing Operation Linebacker, an effort launched in response to the massive North Vietnamese invasion of South Vietnam on March 30. The purpose of the raids were to

interdict supplies from outside sources and the movement of equipment and supplies to the North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam. The strikes concentrated on rail lines around Hanoi and Haiphong, bridges, pipelines, power plants, troops and troop training facilities, and rail lines to China.

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- **May 24 1846 – Mexican*American War:** General Zachary Taylor captures Monterrey. Casualties and losses: US 450 - Mex 450.
- **May 24 1861 – Civil War:** Union troops occupy Alexandria, Virginia.
- **May 24 1941 – WW2:** *The Bismarck sinks the Hood* » In the Battle of the Atlantic, Germany's largest battleship, the Bismarck, sinks the pride of the British fleet, HMS Hood. The Bismarck was the most modern of Germany's battleships, a prize coveted by other nation's navies, even while still in the blueprint stage (Hitler handed over a copy of its blueprints to Joseph Stalin as a concession during the days of the Hitler-Stalin neutrality pact). The HMS Hood, originally launched in 1918, was Britain's largest battle cruiser (41,200 tons)-but also capable of achieving the relatively fast speed of 31 knots. The two met in the North Atlantic, northeast of Iceland, where two British cruisers had tracked down the Bismarck. Commanded by Admiral Gunther Lutjens, commander in chief of the German Fleet, the Bismarck sunk the Hood, resulting in the death of 1,500 of its crew; only three Brits survived.



Bismarck (left) & HMS Hood (right)

During the engagement, the Bismarck's fuel tank was damaged. Lutjens tried to make for the French coast, but was sighted again only three days later. Torpedoed to the point of incapacity, the Bismarck was finally sunk by a ring of British war ships. Admiral Lutjens was one of the 2,300 German casualties.

- **May 24 1941 – WW2:** *Auschwitz gets a new doctor: "the Angel of Death"* » The extermination camp at Auschwitz, Poland, receives a new doctor, 32-year-old Josef Mengele, a man who will earn the nickname "the Angel of Death."



Born March 16, 1911, in Bavaria, Mengele studied philosophy under Alfred Rosenberg, whose racial theories highly influenced him. In 1934, already a member of the Nazi Party, he joined the research staff of the Institute for Hereditary Biology and Racial Hygiene.

Upon arriving at Auschwitz, and eager to advance his medical career by publishing “groundbreaking” work, he began experimenting on live Jewish prisoners. In the guise of medical “treatment,” he injected, or ordered others to inject, thousands of inmates with everything from petrol to chloroform. He also had a penchant for studying twins, whom he used to dissect.

Mengele managed to escape imprisonment after the war, first by working as a farm stableman in Bavaria, then by making his way to South America. He became a citizen of Paraguay in 1959. He later moved to Brazil, where he met up with another former Nazi party member, Wolfgang Gerhard. In 1985, a multinational team of forensic experts traveled to Brazil in search of Mengele. They determined that a man named Gerhard, but believed to be Mengele, had died of a stroke while swimming in 1979. Dental records later confirmed that Mengele had, at some point, assumed Gerhard’s identity, and was in fact the stroke victim.

A fictional account of Josef Mengele’s life after the war was depicted in the film *Boys from Brazil*, with Mengele portrayed by Gregory Peck.

- **May 24 1959 – Cold War:** *John Foster Dulles dies* » After battling cancer for nearly three years, former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles dies. Dulles served as secretary of state from 1953 until shortly before his death in 1959 and was considered one of the primary architects of America’s Cold War foreign policy during that period.

Dulles was born in 1888, the son of a Presbyterian minister. President Dwight D. Eisenhower would later joke that the serious Dulles had been preparing to become secretary of state since he was a toddler. This was not far from the truth. Dulles’ great-uncle was John W. Foster, who served as secretary of state during the 1890s (and for whom John Foster Dulles was named). His uncle, Robert Lansing, had filled the same position during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson. Thus, when Eisenhower selected Dulles to be his secretary of state in 1952, he was keeping a family tradition alive. Dulles, however, was not one to merely follow in the footsteps of his famous relatives. He was determined to have an impact on U.S. foreign policy. He brought to his thinking about international relations a strong dose of religion, which often had the effect of simplifying complex issues into contests between good and evil, right and wrong. He was also ferociously anticommunist.



As secretary of state, Dulles was most famous for developing the notion of “massive retaliation.” In this theory, Dulles posited that the United States should make it known that it was ready and willing to use its massive nuclear arsenal to retaliate against threats to American interests around the globe. Dulles believed that it would never come to that, since the Soviets, faced with nuclear annihilation, would back away from the “brink” of atomic warfare. The secretary was also well known for his views on Third World neutralism. In Dulles’ view, neutralism in the battle against communism was a sin. During his tenure, Dulles saw the United States through several foreign policy crises, including the Suez Crisis of 1956. In 1956, however, it was discovered that Dulles was suffering from lung cancer. Over the next two-and-a-half years, Dulles bravely battled the disease, continuing his work as secretary of state between trips to the hospital for treatment. On April 22, 1959, Dulles resigned his position when he became too weak to fulfill his duties. Christian Herter replaced him as Secretary of State.

- **May 24 1964 – Vietnam War:** *Goldwater suggests using atomic weapons* » Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Arizona), running for the Republican Party nomination in the upcoming presidential election, gives an interview in which he discusses the use of low-yield atomic bombs in North Vietnam to defoliate forests and destroy bridges, roads, and railroad lines bringing supplies from communist China. During the storm of criticism that followed, Goldwater tried to back away from these drastic actions, claiming that he did not mean to advocate the use of atomic bombs but was “repeating a suggestion made by competent military people.” Democrats painted Goldwater as a warmonger who was overly eager to use nuclear weapons in Vietnam. Though he won his party’s nomination, Goldwater was never able to shake his image as an extremist in Vietnam policies. This image was a key factor in his crushing defeat by opponent Lyndon B. Johnson, who took about 61 percent of the vote to Goldwater’s 39 percent.
- **May 24 1971 – Vietnam War:** *Soldiers place controversial ad in antiwar newspaper* » At Fort Bragg, North Carolina, an antiwar newspaper advertisement signed by 29 U.S. soldiers supporting the Concerned Officers Movement results in controversy. The group had been formed in 1970 in Washington, D.C., by a small group of junior naval officers opposed to the war. The newspaper advertisement at Fort Bragg was in support of group’s members, who had joined with antiwar activist David Harris and others in San Diego to mobilize opposition to the departure of the carrier USS Constellation for Vietnam. No official action was taken against the military dissidents at Fort Bragg and the aircraft carrier sailed on schedule from San Diego.

- **May 25 1861 – Civil War:** *President Lincoln suspends the writ of habeas corpus* » John Merryman, a state legislator from Maryland, is arrested for attempting to hinder Union troops from moving from Baltimore to Washington during the Civil War and is held at Fort McHenry by Union military officials. His attorney immediately sought a writ of habeas corpus so that a federal court could examine the charges. However, President Abraham Lincoln decided to suspend the right of habeas corpus, and the general in command of Fort McHenry refused to turn Merryman over to the authorities.



Federal judge Roger Taney, the chief justice of the Supreme Court (and also the author of the infamous Dred Scott decision), issued a ruling that President Lincoln did not have the authority to suspend habeas corpus. Lincoln didn't respond, appeal, or order the release of Merryman. But during a July 4 speech, Lincoln was defiant, insisting that he needed to suspend the rules in order to put down the rebellion in the South.

Five years later, a new Supreme Court essentially backed Justice Taney's ruling: In an unrelated case, the court held that only Congress could suspend habeas corpus and that civilians were not subject to military courts, even in times of war.

This was not the first or last time that the U.S. federal government willfully ignored its own laws during times of strife. Hundreds of thousands of Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps following the attack on Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II. Some forty years later, a U.S. congressional commission determined that those held in the camps had been victims of discrimination. Each camp survivor was awarded \$20,000 in compensation from the U.S. government.

- **May 25 1915 – WWI:** *Second Battle of Ypres ends* » The Second Battle of Ypres was the first mass use by Germany of poison gas on the Western Front. It also marked the first time a former colonial force (the 1st Canadian Division) defeated a European power (the German Empire) in Europe (at the battles of St. Julien and Kitcheners' Wood). Although poison gas had been used on the Eastern Front, it surprised the Allies and about 7,000 gas casualties were transported in field ambulances and treated in casualty clearing stations. In May and June, 350 British deaths were recorded from gas poisoning. Both sides developed gas weapons and counter-measures, which changed the nature of gas warfare. The battle created 105,000 casualties



- **May 25 1944 – WW2: Operation Knight's Move is launched** » Germany launches Operation Knight's Move (Rösselsprung), in an attempt to seize Yugoslav communist partisan leader Tito. Using parachute drops and glider troops, German forces landed in the Yugoslavian village of Drvar, where Josep Broz Tito, leader of the anti-Axis guerilla movement, was believed to be. The village was decimated: Men, women, and children were all killed by German troops in search of Tito, who escaped.



Marshal Josip Broz Tito (far right) with his cabinet and principal staff officers in Drvar, days before the offensive.

The airborne assault was preceded by heavy bombing of the town by the Luftwaffe. The ground forces included Home Guard forces of the Independent State of Croatia. Tito, his principal headquarters staff and the Allied military personnel escaped, despite their presence in Drvar at the time of the airborne assault. The operation failed due to a number of factors, including Partisan resistance in the town itself and along the approaches to Drvar. The failure of the various German intelligence agencies to share the limited intelligence available on Tito's exact location and the lack of contingency planning by the commander of the German airborne force also contributed to the unsuccessful outcome for the Germans.

- **May 25 1944 – WW2: Auschwitz II revolt** » As several hundred Hungarian Jews were being led to a gas chamber in Birkenau (a supplementary camp, part of the Auschwitz complex known as Auschwitz II), the prisoners ran into the woods, suspecting their fate. Searchlights flooded the surrounding area, enabling the SS, who controlled the camp, to shoot all those who fled. This was the second such revolt in three days.

- **May 25 1953 – Cold War:** *First atomic cannon is fired in Nevada.* » The M65 atomic cannon, often called "Atomic Annie", [3] was an artillery piece built by the United States and capable of firing a nuclear device. It was developed in the early 1950s, at the beginning of the Cold War, and fielded, by 1953, in Europe and South Korea.

On 25 MAY at 8:30 a.m., the atomic cannon was tested at the Nevada Test Site (specifically Frenchman Flat) as part of the Upshot–Knothole series of nuclear tests. The test—codenamed "Grable"—was attended by the Chairman-delegate of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Arthur W. Radford and United States Secretary of Defense Charles Erwin Wilson; it resulted in the successful detonation of a 15 kiloton shell (W9 warhead) at a range of 7 miles (11 km). This was the first and only nuclear shell to be fired from a cannon.



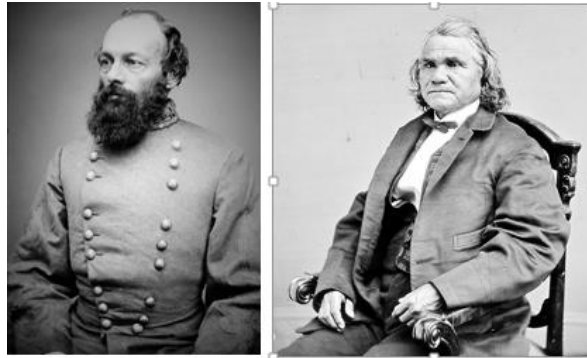
After the successful test, at least 20 cannons were manufactured at Watervliet and Watertown Arsenals, at a cost of \$800,000 each. They were deployed overseas to Europe and Korea, frequently shifted around to avoid being detected and targeted by opposing forces. Due to the size of the apparatus, their limited range, the development of nuclear shells compatible with existing artillery pieces (the W48 for the 155 mm and the W33 for the 203 mm), and the development of rocket- and missile-based nuclear artillery (such as the Little John and Honest John tactical nuclear missiles), the M65 was effectively obsolete soon after it was deployed. However, it remained a prestige weapon and was not retired until 1963.

- **May 25 1968 – Vietnam War:** Communist launch new offensive » The communists launch their third major assault of the year on Saigon. The heaviest fighting occurred during the first three days of June, and again centered on Cholon, the Chinese section of Saigon, where U.S. and South Vietnamese forces used helicopters, fighter-bombers, and tanks to dislodge deeply entrenched Viet Cong infiltrators. A captured enemy directive, which the U.S. command made public on 28 MAY, indicated that the Viet Cong saw the offensive as a means of influencing the Paris peace talks in their favor.
- **May 25 1969 – Vietnam War:** *National Democratic Front formed in Saigon* » South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu assumes personal leadership of the National Social Democratic Front at its inaugural meeting in Saigon. Thieu said the establishment of this coalition party was “the first concrete step in unifying the political factions in South Vietnam for the coming political struggle with the communists,” and emphasized that the new party would not be “totalitarian or despotic.” The six major parties comprising the NSDF coalition were: the Greater Union Force, composed largely of militant Roman Catholic refugees from North Vietnam; the Social Humanist Party, successor to the Can Lao party, which had held power under the Ngo Dinh Diem regime; the Revolutionary Dai Viet,

created to fight the French; the Social Democratic Party, a faction of the Hoa Hao religious sect; the United Vietnam Kuomintang, formed as an anti-French party; and the People's Alliance for Social Revolution, a pro-government bloc formed in 1968.

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- **May 26 1783 – American Revolution:** A Great Jubilee Day held at North Stratford, Connecticut celebrated end of fighting in American Revolution.
- **May 26 1865 – Civil War:** *One of the last Confederate generals surrenders* » Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith, commander of the Confederate Trans-Mississippi division, surrenders on this day in 1865, one of the last Confederate generals to capitulate. Smith, who had become commander of the area in January 1863, was charged with keeping the Mississippi River open to the Southerners. Yet he was more interested in recapturing Arkansas and Missouri, largely because of the influence of Arkansans in the Confederate Congress who helped to secure his appointment.



Generals Edmund Smith and Stand Watie

Drawing sharp criticism for his failure to provide relief for Vicksburg, Mississippi in the summer of 1863, Smith later conducted the resistance to the Union's failed Red River campaign of 1864. When the Confederate forces under Robert E. Lee and Joseph Johnston surrendered in the spring of 1865, Smith continued to resist with his small army in Texas. He insisted that Lee and Johnston were prisoners of war and decried Confederate deserters. On 2 MAY, General Simon Buckner, acting for Smith, met with Union officers in New Orleans to arrange the surrender of Smith's force under terms similar to Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Virginia. Smith reluctantly agreed, and officially laid down his arms at Galveston on 2 JUN. Smith himself fled to Mexico, and then to Cuba, before returning to Virginia in November 1865 to sign an amnesty oath. He was the last surviving full Confederate general until his death in 1893.

Twenty-three days after Smith's surrender, Brigadier General Stand Watie, a Cherokee, became the last Confederate field general to surrender.

- **May 26 1940 – WW2:** The Siege of Calais ends with the surrender of the British and French garrison. Casualties and losses: Allies 4,000 – Ger 750 to 800.

- **May 26 1940 – WW2:** Battle of Dunkirk – In France, Allied forces begin a massive 9-day evacuation from Dunkirk, France. Casualties and losses: Allies 51,000 + 50,000 vehicles + 9 destroyers + 200 marine vassals + 177 aircraft – Ger 20 to 30,000 + 100 tanks + 240 aircraft.
- **May 26 1942 – WW2:** Battle of Gazala - Western Desert Rommel Campaign fought around the port of Tobruk. Casualties and losses: Allies ~50,000 + 1,188 tanks – Axis ~5,000 + 400 tanks.
- **May 26 1945 – WW2:** *U.S. drop fire bombs on Tokyo* » The Bombing of Tokyo was a series of firebombing air raids by the United States Army Air Forces during the Pacific campaigns of World War II. Operation Meetinghouse, which was conducted on the night of 9–10 March 1945, is regarded as the single most destructive bombing raid in human history. 16 square miles of central Tokyo were destroyed, leaving an estimated 100,000 civilians dead and over 1 million homeless.



Tokyo burns under B-29 firebomb assault on 26 MAY

The US first mounted a seaborne, small-scale air raid on Tokyo in April 1942. Strategic bombing and urban area bombing began in 1944 after the long-range B-29 Superfortress bomber entered service, first deployed from China and thereafter the Mariana Islands. B-29 raids from those islands began on 17 November 1944, and lasted until 15 August 1945, the day of Japanese surrender. Over 50% of Tokyo's industry was spread out among residential and commercial neighborhoods; firebombing cut the whole city's output in half.

- **May 26 1948 – U.S. Air Force:** The U.S. Congress passes Public Law 557, which permanently establishes the Civil Air Patrol as an auxiliary of the United States Air Force.
- **May 26 1960 – Cold War:** *United States charges Soviets with espionage* » During a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Henry Cabot Lodge charges that the Soviet Union has engaged in espionage activities at the U.S. embassy in Moscow for years. The charges were obviously an attempt by the United States to deflect Soviet criticisms following the downing of an American U-2 spy plane over Russia earlier in the month.



On May 1, 1960, a highly sophisticated (and supposedly invulnerable) U.S. spy plane, the U-2, was shot down over the Soviet Union. Although U.S. officials at first denied the existence of any such spy planes, the Soviets gleefully produced both the wreckage of the plane and its pilot, Francis Gary Powers. Embarrassed U.S. officials, including President Dwight D. Eisenhower, were forced to publicly admit that the United States was indeed spying on the Soviet Union with the high altitude planes. However, the U.S. government consistently declared that it was doing nothing that the Soviets themselves were not doing. As evidence of that charge, Henry Cabot Lodge brought the issue before the U.N. Security Council. There, he produced a wooden reproduction of the Great Seal of the United States. Nestled inside was a small listening and transmitting device. Lodge claimed that the seal had been presented to the U.S. embassy in Moscow in 1945 by a group of Russian citizens. In 1952, a security sweep of the embassy discovered the listening device. Lodge went on to note that more than 100 other such devices had been found in the U.S. embassies in Russia and other communist-bloc countries during the last few years. The Soviet representative on the Security Council chuckled often during Lodge's presentation and then asked, "From what plays were these props taken and when will it open?"

Despite the U.S. charges of Soviet espionage, nothing could undo the damage of the downed U-2 spy plane, the subsequent denials, and the public embarrassment suffered by Eisenhower and other U.S. officials when they were caught in a lie. Just 10 days before Lodge's presentation in the Security Council, a summit meeting between Eisenhower and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev ended with each side exchanging angry accusations about spying and bad faith.

- **May 26 1965 – Vietnam War:** Australian troops depart for Vietnam » Eight hundred Australian troops depart for Vietnam and New Zealand announces that it will send an artillery battalion.



The Australian government had first sent troops to Vietnam in 1964 in the form of a small aviation detachment and an engineer civic action team. They were increasing their commitment to the war with the deployment of the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (RAR). In 1966, the Australians once again increased their troop strength in Vietnam with the formation of the First Australian Task Force, which established a base of operations near Ba Ria in Phuoc Tuy province. The task force included two infantry battalions, a medium tank squadron, and a helicopter squadron, as well as signal, engineer, and other support forces. By 1969, Australian forces in Vietnam totaled an estimated 8,000 personnel.

New Zealand had initially sent a small engineer detachment to South Vietnam, but later sent an artillery battery in July 1965. Over time, the New Zealand contingent, which was placed under the operational control of the First Australian Task Force, grew to over 1,000 men.

The Australian and New Zealand contingents were part of the Free World Military Forces, also known as the “many flags” program, which was 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.

Australia and New Zealand began to withdraw their troops in 1970, following the lead of the United States as it drastically reduced its troop commitment to South Vietnam.

- **May 26 1971 – Vietnam War:** *North Vietnamese seize Snoul, Cambodia* » In Cambodia, an estimated 1,000 North Vietnamese capture the strategic rubber plantation town of Snoul, driving out 2,000 South Vietnamese as U.S. air strikes support the Allied forces. Snoul gave the communists control of sections of Routes 7 and 13 that led into South Vietnam and access to large amounts of abandoned military equipment and supplies. On 31 MAY, the Cambodian government called for peace talks if all North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces agreed to withdraw. The communists rejected the bid. Cambodia ultimately fell to the communist Khmer Rouge and their North Vietnamese allies in April 1975.
- **May 26 2004 – Terrorists:** The U.S. Army veteran Terry Nichols is found guilty of 161 state murder charges for helping carry out the Oklahoma City bombing.



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- **May 27 1813 – War of 1812:** *American forces capture Fort George in Canada* -- The Americans planned an attack on a key British Fort, Fort George that was located on the Niagara River opposite Fort Niagara. The Americans, who had 4,000 troops at their disposal, began to bombard Fort George

from Fort Niagara and other positions on 25 MAY. This alerted British commander Brigadier General John Vincent that the Americans were going to attack. He had 1,000 troops at his disposal. His problem was that he did not know from what side the Americans were going to attack. He decided that they would land along the Niagara River thus gaining the support from Fort Niagara on the other side.

The American forces under the command of Colonel Winfield Scott landed on Lake Erie instead, in the early hours of 27 MAY, with four hundred troops at Newark. The British forces put up a spirited defense trying to stop the Americans from landing but were unsuccessful. Once they thry landed Vincent decided that there was no way he could stop the American forces. He ordered Fort George blown up and an immediate withdrawal of his forces. Scott advanced so quickly that the Americans managed to extinguish the fuses before most of the fort could blow up.

With the hope of capturing the whole British force an American force had been tasked with blocking the British retreat. Unfortunately for the Americans their troops were late in being getting in place and could not successfully cut off the British forces, thus they escaped to fight another day. The Americans lost 41 killed and 113 wounded. The British lost 52 killed, 44 wounded and 262 missing

- **May 27 1863 – Civil War:** First Assault on the Confederate works at the 48 day Siege of Port Hudson.
- **May 27 1905 – Russo-Japanese War:** *The Battle of Tsushima Strait* » The Russian Baltic Fleet is nearly destroyed at the Battle of Tsushima Strait. The decisive defeat, in which only 10 of 45 Russian warships escaped to safety, convinced Russian leaders that further resistance against Japan’s imperial designs for East Asia was hopeless.

On February 8, 1904, following the Russian rejection of a Japanese plan to divide Manchuria and Korea into spheres of influence, Japan launched a surprise naval attack against Port Arthur, a Russian naval base in China. It was the first major battle of the 20th century, and the Russian fleet was decimated. During the subsequent war, Japan won a series of decisive victories over the Russians, who underestimated the military potential of its non-Western opponent. In January 1905, the strategic naval base of Port Arthur fell to Japanese naval and ground forces under Admiral Heihachiro Togo, and in March Russian troops were defeated at Shenyang, China, by Japanese Field Marshal Iwao Oyama.



Russian Czar Nicholas II hoped that the Russian Baltic fleet under Admiral Zinovy Rozhdestvensky would be able to challenge Admiral Togo's supremacy at sea, but during the two-day Battle of Tsushima Strait, beginning on May 27, more than 30 Russian ships were sunk or captured by the superior Japanese warships. In August, the stunning string of Japanese victories convinced Russia to accept the peace treaty mediated by U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. (Roosevelt was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for this achievement.) In the Treaty of Portsmouth, Russia recognized Japan as the dominant power in Korea and gave up Port Arthur, the southern half of Sakhalin Island, and the Liaotung Peninsula to Japan.

Japan emerged from the conflict as the first modern non-Western world power and set its sights on greater imperial expansion. However, for Russia, its military's disastrous performance in the war was one of the immediate causes of the Russian Revolution of 1905.

- **May 27 1940 – WW2:** In the Le Paradis massacre, 99 soldiers from a Royal Norfolk Regiment unit are shot after surrendering to German troops; two survive.
- **May 27 1941 – WW2:** Bismarck sunk by Royal Navy » The British navy sinks the German battleship Bismarck in the North Atlantic near France. The German death toll was more than 2,000.

On February 14, 1939, the 823-foot Bismarck was launched at Hamburg. Nazi leader Adolf Hitler hoped that the state-of-the-art battleship would herald the rebirth of the German surface battle fleet. However, after the outbreak of war, Britain closely guarded ocean routes from Germany to the Atlantic Ocean, and only U-boats moved freely through the war zone.



In May 1941, the order was given for the Bismarck to break out into the Atlantic. Once in the safety of the open ocean, the battleship would be almost impossible to track down, all the while wreaking havoc on Allied convoys to Britain. Learning of its movement, Britain sent almost the entire British Home Fleet in pursuit. On 24 MAY, the British battle cruiser Hood and battleship Prince of Wales intercepted it near Iceland. In a ferocious battle, the Hood exploded and sank, and all but three of the 1,421 crewmen were killed. The Bismarck escaped, but because it was leaking fuel it fled for occupied France. On 26 MAY, it was sighted and crippled by British aircraft, and on 27 MAY three British warships descended on the Bismarck and finished it off.

- **May 27 1942 – WW2:** Operation Anthropoid - Reinhard Heydrich, one of the main architects of the Holocaust is fatally wounded in Prague; he dies of his injuries eight days later.



- **May 27 1943 – WW2:** *U.S. Olympian Louie Zamperini's plane goes down* » Zamperini enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps in September 1941 and earned a commission as a second lieutenant. He was deployed to the Pacific island of Funafuti as a bombardier on the Consolidated B-24 Liberator bomber *Super Man*. In April 1943, during a bombing mission against the Japanese-held island of Nauru, the bomber was badly damaged in combat. With *Super Man* no longer flight-worthy, and a number of the crew injured, the healthy crew members were transferred to Hawaii to await reassignment. Zamperini, along with some other former *Super Man* crewmates, was assigned to conduct a search for a lost aircraft and crew. They were given another B-24, *Green Hornet*, notorious among the pilots as a defective "lemon."

While on the search 27 May, mechanical difficulties caused the bomber to crash into the ocean 850 miles south of Oahu, killing eight of the 11 men aboard. The three survivors were Zamperini and his crewmates, pilot Russell Allen Phillips and Francis McNamara; with little food and no water, they subsisted on captured rainwater, small fish eaten raw, and birds that landed on their raft. McNamara ate all the chocolate they had in a panic, but he later redeemed himself by using an oar to defend the survivors from a shark attack. They attempted to gain the attention of a search plane but failed. With the few tools they were able to salvage from the crash, the men were able to manage on two small rafts that got released. They caught two albatrosses, one of which they ate, and used pieces as bait to catch fish, all while fending off constant shark attacks and nearly being capsized by a storm.



Zamperini examines a hole in his B-24D Liberator *Super Man* made by a 20 mm shell over Nauru.

They were strafed multiple times by a Japanese bomber, which punctured their life raft, but no one was hit. After 33 days at sea, McNamara died; to wish him a good life, free from the war, Zamperini

and Phillips wrapped up his body and sent it into the sea. On their 47th day adrift, they reached land in the Marshall Islands and were immediately captured by the Japanese Navy.

They were held in captivity, severely beaten, and mistreated until the end of the war in August 1945. Initially held at Kwajalein Atoll, after 42 days they were transferred to the Japanese prisoner-of-war camp at Ōfuna, for captives who were not registered as prisoners of war (POW). Zamperini was later transferred to Tokyo's Ōmori POW camp, and was eventually transferred to the Naoetsu POW camp in northern Japan, where he stayed until the war ended. He was tormented by prison guard Mutsuhiro "The Bird" Watanabe, who was later included in General Douglas MacArthur's list of the forty most wanted war criminals in Japan.

Zamperini was held at the same camp as then-Major Greg "Pappy" Boyington, and in his book, *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, Boyington describes the Italian recipes Zamperini would write to keep the prisoners' minds off the food and conditions. The defiant American managed to survive and was released after the war ended in 1945. Back home in California, Zamperini drank heavily and was haunted by his experiences in captivity. Then, after being inspired by evangelist Billy Graham to convert to Christianity in 1949, Zamperini went on to become an inspirational speaker, forgive his captors and publish an autobiography, "Devil at my Heels." A wider audience learned about his life with the publication of "Unbroken" by Laura Hillenbrand, author of the 2001 best-seller "Seabiscuit: An American Legend," about the Depression-era champion racehorse.

- **May 27 1944 – WW2:** American General MacArthur lands on Biak Island in New Guinea.
- **May 27 1945 – WW2:** *Battle of Okinawa* » Naha is officially captured by American forces. The Orouku Peninsula to the south is now within reach.
- **May 27 1958 – U.S. Air Force:** The F-4 Phantom II makes its first flight.
- **May 27 1965 – Vietnam War:** *U.S. warships begin bombardment of Viet Cong targets* » Augmenting the vital role now being played by U.S. aircraft carriers, whose planes participated in many of the raids over South and North Vietnam, U.S. warships from the 7th Fleet begin to fire on Viet Cong targets in the central area of South Vietnam. At first, this gunfire was limited to 5-inch-gun destroyers, but other ships would eventually be used in the mission.

Organized into Task Group 70.8, the ships were assigned from the fleet's cruiser-destroyer command, from the carrier escort units and amphibious units, from the Navy-Coast Guard Coastal Surveillance Force, and from the Royal Australian Navy. Ships and weapons included the battleship *New Jersey*, with 16-inch guns; cruisers with 8-inch and 5-inch guns; destroyers with 5-inch guns, and inshore fire support ships and landing ships.

Naval gunfire support and shore bombardment ranged the entire coast of Vietnam, but most of the operations took place off the coast of the northernmost region of South Vietnam, just south of the Demilitarized Zone. During the 1968 Tet Offensive, Task Group 70.8 had as many as 22 ships at a time on the gun line, offering invaluable naval gunfire support to ground forces.

In May 1972, as part of Operation Linebacker I, a 7th Fleet cruiser-destroyer group bombarded targets near Haiphong and along the North Vietnam coast, firing over 111,000 rounds at the enemy.

One destroyer was hit by a MiG bombing attack and 16 ships were hit by communist shore batteries, but none were sunk.

- **May 27 1967 – U.S. Navy:** The U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy is launched by Jacqueline Kennedy and her daughter Caroline.
- **May 27 1971 – Vietnam War:** *Sweden announces support to Viet Cong* » In Sweden, Foreign Minister Torsten Nilsson reveals that Sweden has been providing assistance to the Viet Cong, including some \$550,000 worth of medical supplies. Similar Swedish aid was to go to Cambodian and Laotian civilians affected by the Indochinese fighting. This support was primarily humanitarian in nature and included no military aid.
- **May 27 1972 – Cold War:** *SALT agreements signed* » Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev and U.S. President Richard Nixon, meeting in Moscow, sign the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) agreements. At the time, these agreements were the most far-reaching attempts to control nuclear weapons ever.



Nixon and Brezhnev seemed unlikely candidates for the American and Soviet statesmen who would sign a groundbreaking arms limitation treaty. Both men carried reputations as hard-line Cold War warriors. Yet, by 1972, both leaders were eager for closer diplomatic relations between their respective nations. The Soviet Union was engaged in an increasingly hostile war of words with communist China; border disputes between the two nations had erupted in the past few years. The United States was looking for help in extricating itself from the unpopular and costly war in Vietnam. Nixon, in particular, wished to take the American public's mind off the fact that during nearly four years as president, he had failed to bring an end to the conflict. The May 1972 summit meeting between Nixon and Brezhnev was an opportune moment to pursue the closer relations each desired.

The most important element of the summit concerned the SALT agreements. Discussions on SALT had been occurring for about two-and-a-half years, but with little progress. During the May 1972 meeting between Nixon and Brezhnev, however, a monumental breakthrough was achieved. The SALT agreements signed on 27 MAY addressed two major issues. First, they limited the number of antiballistic missile (ABM) sites each country could have to two. (ABMs were missiles designed to destroy incoming missiles.) Second, the number of intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles was frozen at existing levels. There was nothing in the agreements, however, about multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle missiles (single missiles carrying

multiple nuclear warheads) or about the development of new weapons. Nevertheless, most Americans and Soviets hailed the SALT agreements as tremendous achievements. In August 1972, the U.S. Senate approved the agreements by an overwhelming vote. SALT-I, as it came to be known, was the foundation for all arms limitations talks that followed.

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- **May 28 1754 – French and Indian War:** *First blood in Seven Years War* » In the first engagement of the French and Indian War, a Virginia militia under 22-year-old Lieutenant Colonel George Washington defeats a French reconnaissance party in southwestern Pennsylvania. In a surprise attack, the Virginians killed 10 French soldiers from Fort Duquesne, including the French commander, Coulon de Jumonville, and took 21 prisoners. Only one of Washington's men was killed.

The French and Indian War was the last and most important of a series of colonial conflicts between the British and the American colonists on one side, and the French and their broad network of Native American allies on the other. Fighting began in the spring of 1754, but Britain and France did not officially declare war against each other until May 1756 and the outbreak of the Seven Years War in Europe.

In November 1752, at the age of 20, George Washington was appointed adjutant in the Virginia colonial militia, which involved the inspection, mustering, and regulation of various militia companies. In November 1753, he first gained public notice when he volunteered to carry a message from Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie to the French moving into the Ohio Valley, warning them to leave the territory, which was claimed by the British crown. Washington succeeded in the perilous wilderness journey and brought back an alarming message: The French intended to stay.



In 1754, George Washington, of the Virginia Regiment, was dispatched to warn the French to leave Virginian territory.

In 1754, Dinwiddie appointed Washington a lieutenant colonel and sent him out with 160 men to reinforce a colonial post at what is now Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Before Washington could reach it, however, it was given up without bloodshed to the French, who renamed it Fort Duquesne. Washington moved within about 40 miles of the French position and set about building a new post at Great Meadows, which he named Fort Necessity. From this base, he ambushed an advance detachment of about 30 French, striking the first blow of the French and Indian War. For the victory, Washington was appointed a full colonel and reinforced with several hundred Virginia and North Carolina troops.

On 3 JUL, the French descended on Fort Necessity with their full force, and after an all-day fight Washington surrendered to their superior numbers. The disarmed colonials were allowed to march back to Virginia, and Washington was hailed as a hero despite his surrender of the fort. The story of the campaign was written up in a London gazette, and Washington was quoted as saying, "I have heard the bullets whistle; and believe me, there is something charming in the sound." Reading this, King George II remarked, "He would not say so if he had been used to hear many."

In October 1754, Washington resigned his commission in protest of the British underpayment of colonial offices and policy of making them subordinate to all British officers, regardless of rank. In early 1755, however, British General Edward Braddock and his army arrived to Virginia, and Washington agreed to serve as Braddock's personal aide-de-camp, with the courtesy title of colonel. The subsequent expedition against Fort Duquesne was a disaster, but Washington fought bravely and succeeded in bringing the survivors back after Braddock and 1,000 others were killed.

With the western frontier of Virginia now dangerously exposed, Governor Dinwiddie appointed Washington commander in chief of all Virginia forces in August 1755. During the next three years, Washington struggled with the problems of frontier defense but participated in no major engagements until he was put in command of a Virginia regiment participating in a large British campaign against Fort Duquesne in 1758. The French burned and abandoned the fort before the British and Americans arrived, and Fort Pitt was raised on its site. With Virginia's strategic objective attained, Washington resigned his commission with the honorary rank of brigadier general. He returned to a planter's life and took a seat in Virginia's House of Burgesses.

The French and Indian War raged on elsewhere in North America for several years. With the signing of the Treaty of Paris in February 1763, France lost all claims to the mainland of North America east of the Mississippi and gave up Louisiana, including New Orleans, to Spain. Fifteen years later, French bitterness over the loss of their North American empire contributed to their intervention in the American Revolution on the side of the Patriots, despite the fact that the Patriots were led by one of France's old enemies, George Washington.

- **May 28 1863 – Civil War2:** *African-American regiment departs for combat* » The 54th Massachusetts Infantry, the most famous African-American regiment of the war, leaves Boston for combat in the South. For the first two years of the war, President Abraham Lincoln resisted the use of black troops despite the pleas of men such as Frederick Douglass, who argued that no one had more to fight for than African Americans. Lincoln finally endorsed, albeit timidly, the introduction of blacks for service in the military in the Emancipation Proclamation. On May 22, 1863, the War Department established the Bureau of Colored Troops to recruit and assemble black regiments. Many blacks, often freed or escaped slaves, joined the military and found themselves usually under white leadership. Ninety percent of all officers in the United States Colored Troops (USCT) were white.

Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, the idealistic scion of an abolitionist family, headed the 54th. Shaw was a veteran of the 2nd Massachusetts infantry and saw action in the 1862 Shenandoah Valley and Antietam campaigns. After being selected by Massachusetts Governor John Andrew to organize and lead the 54th, Shaw carefully selected the most physically fit soldiers and white officers with established antislavery views. The regiment included two of Frederick Douglass's sons and the grandson of Sojourner Truth.



On May 28, 1863, the new regiment marched onto a steamer and set sail for Port Royal, South Carolina. The unit saw action right away, taking part in a raid into Georgia and withstanding a Confederate attack near Charleston, South Carolina. On July 18, 1863, Shaw led a bold but doomed attack against Fort Wagner, South Carolina, in which he was killed and the 54th suffered heavy casualties.

The story of Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts was immortalized in the critically acclaimed 1990 movie *Glory*, starring Mathew Broderick, Denzell Washington, and Morgan Freeman

- **May 28 1940 – WW2:** Belgium surrenders to Nazi Germany to end the Battle of Belgium.
- **May 28 1940 – WW2:** Norwegian, French, Polish and British forces recapture Narvik in Norway. This is the first allied infantry victory of the War.
- **May 28 1942 – WW2:** In retaliation for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, Nazis in Czechoslovakia kill over 1,800 people.
- **May 28 1964 – Terrorism:** *PLO is founded* » The Palestine Liberation Organization was founded. In February of 1969, Yasir Arafat was elected as its leader. By 1974, when he addressed the United Nations, Arafat had made significant strides towards establishing new respectability for the PLO's campaign for a Palestinian homeland. But gaining legitimacy hinged on cooling down terrorism, and Arafat found it increasingly difficult to reconcile the moderate and extremist segments of Palestinian politics.
- **May 28 1965 – Vietnam War:** *U.S. troops abandon "Hamburger Hill"* » U.S. troops abandon Ap Bia Mountain. A spokesman for the 101st Airborne Division said that the U.S. troops "have completed their search of the mountain and are now continuing their reconnaissance-in-force mission throughout the A Shau Valley."

This announcement came amid the public outcry about what had become known as the "Battle of Hamburger Hill." The battle was part of Operation Apache Snow in the A Shau Valley. The operation began on 10 MAY when paratroopers from the 101st Airborne engaged a North Vietnamese regiment

on the slopes of Hill 937, known to the Vietnamese as Ap Bia Mountain. Entrenched in prepared fighting positions, the North Vietnamese 29th Regiment repulsed the initial American assault and beat back another attempt by the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry on 14 MAY. An intense battle raged for the next 10 days as the mountain came under heavy Allied air strikes, artillery barrages, and 10 infantry assaults. On 20 MAY, Maj. Gen. Melvin Zais, commanding general of the 101st, sent in two additional U.S. airborne battalions and a South Vietnamese battalion as reinforcements. The communist stronghold was finally captured in the 11th attack, when the American and South Vietnamese soldiers fought their way to the summit of the mountain. In the face of the four-battalion attack, the North Vietnamese retreated to sanctuary areas in Laos.

During the intense fighting, 597 North Vietnamese were reported killed and U.S. casualties were 56 killed and 420 wounded. Due to the bitter fighting and the high loss of life, the battle for Ap Bia Mountain received widespread unfavorable publicity in the United States and was dubbed “Hamburger Hill” in the U.S. media, a name evidently derived from the fact that the battle turned into a “meat grinder.” The purpose of the operation was not to hold territory but rather to keep the North Vietnamese off balance so the decision was made to abandon the mountain shortly after it was captured. The North Vietnamese occupied it a month after it was abandoned.



Outrage over what appeared to be a senseless loss of American lives was exacerbated by pictures published in Life magazine of 241 U.S. soldiers killed during the week of the battle. Gen. Creighton Abrams, commander of U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, was ordered to avoid such battles. Because of Hamburger Hill, and other battles like it, U.S. emphasis was placed on “Vietnamization”—turning the war over to the South Vietnamese forces rather than engage in direct combat operations.

- **May 28 1987 – Cold War: Matthias Rust lands his plane in Red Square** » A 19-year-old amateur pilot Matthias Rust, from West Germany, takes off from Helsinki, Finland, travels through more than 400 miles of Soviet airspace, and lands his small Cessna aircraft in Red Square by the Kremlin. The event proved to be an immense embarrassment to the Soviet government and military.



Rust, described by his mother as a “quiet young man...with a passion for flying,” apparently had no political or social agenda when he took off from the international airport in Helsinki and headed for Moscow. He entered Soviet airspace, but was either undetected or ignored as he pushed farther and farther into the Soviet Union. Early on the morning of May 28, 1987, he arrived over Moscow, circled Red Square a few times, and then landed just a few hundred yards from the Kremlin. Curious onlookers and tourists, many believing that Rust was part of an air show, immediately surrounded him. Very quickly, however, Rust was arrested and whisked away. He was tried for violating Soviet airspace and sentenced to prison. He served 18 months before being released.

The repercussions in the Soviet Union were immediate. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev sacked his minister of defense, and the entire Russian military was humiliated by Rust’s flight into Moscow. U.S. officials had a field day with the event—one American diplomat in the Soviet Union joked, “Maybe we should build a bunch of Cessnas.” Soviet officials were less amused. Four years earlier, the Soviets had been harshly criticized for shooting down a Korean Airlines passenger jet that veered into Russian airspace. Now, the Soviets were laughingstocks for not being able to stop one teenager’s “invasion” of the country. One Russian spokesperson bluntly declared, “You criticize us for shooting down a plane, and now you criticize us for not shooting down a plane.”

- **May 28 2010 – Terrorism: Terrorists Attack Ahmadiyya Mosques in Pakistan** » As Friday prayers came to a close in Lahore, Pakistan, seven terrorists wielding guns, grenades and suicide vests stormed into two crowded Ahmadi Muslim mosques and opened fire, killing 94 victims and injuring more than 120. The coordinated attacks took place just minutes apart. At the Bait-ul-Noor Mosque in Model Town—an upscale neighborhood in Lahore—people ran for their lives as three gunmen entered with AK-47 assault rifles and grenades, opening fire on security personnel and worshippers alike. The attack lasted more than one hour as the attackers shot into the horrified crowd. Twenty-seven people were killed. Several miles away, near Lahore’s main railway station, another three attackers barged into the Dar-ul-Zakir mosque with the same destructive intentions. They sprayed bullets into the congregation and took several hundred people hostage. A three-hour standoff ensued, as police and terrorists exchanged gunfire. Two of the attackers then detonated their suicide vests, killing 67.



The nightmare didn’t end for survivors the day of the mosque attacks. A few days later, gunmen attacked the intensive-care Unit of Lahore’s Jinnah Hospital, where victims and one of the alleged attackers were recovering. Twelve more people, including police officers and hospital staff, were killed. The attackers escaped.

A Punjab provincial chapter of the Taliban took responsibility for all the attacks. Although the incidents came as a horrifying surprise, a leader at the Model Town mosque expressed that they had been receiving threatening phone calls in the weeks prior to the attacks. When Mosque leaders reached out to the police for more security, they received no response. Unfortunately, threats and violence are nothing new for the Ahmadi, who are always met with discrimination from majority Muslim sects. Though the Ahmadi consider themselves Muslim, Pakistani law does not. Even an act as simple as declaring themselves Muslim is considered blasphemy under the law, and can be punished with fines, prison time or death. Sunni Muslim conservatives have led a recent campaign to ostracize the Ahmadis, and Sunni extremists have made them the targets of violence.

The victims of the attacks were buried in Rabwah—the home to the Ahmadi’s religious headquarters. Although Pakistani ministers, politicians and other prominent figures issued statements of condemnation toward the attackers and their actions, none of them attended the services—likely due to fear of political and religious backlash for publicly supporting the much-maligned sect.

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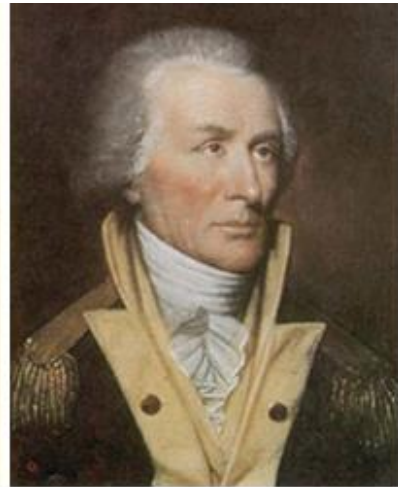
- **May 29 1780 – American Revolution:** *Tarleton gives “quarter” in South Carolina* » the treatment of Patriot prisoners by British Colonel Banastre Tarleton and his Loyalist troops leads to the coining of a phrase that comes to define British brutality for the rest of the War for Independence: “Tarleton’s Quarter.”



Col. Banastre Tarleton



Col. Abraham Buford



Brig. Gen. Thomas Sumter

After the surrender of Charleston on 12 MAY, the 3rd Virginia, commanded by Colonel Abraham Buford, was virtually the only organized Patriot formation remaining in South Carolina; British Colonel Banastre Tarleton had been given the mission to destroy any colonial resistance in the state. At Waxhaws on the North Carolina border, a cavalry charge by Tarleton’s men broke the 350 remaining Patriots under Buford. Tarleton and his Tories proceeded to shoot at the Patriots after their surrender, a move that spawned the term “Tarleton’s Quarter,” which in the eyes of the Patriots meant a brutal death at the hands of a cowardly foe. The Continentals lost 113 killed and 203 captured in the Battle of Waxhaws; British losses totaled 19 men and 31 horses killed or wounded. Although they were routed, the loss became a propaganda victory for the Continentals: wavering Carolina civilians terrified of Tarleton and their Loyalist neighbors were now prepared to rally to the Patriot cause.

Under the leadership of Thomas Sumter, the Patriot militia quickly returned the terror in kind with their own brutal raids on Carolina loyalists. Carolinians went on to fight a bloody civil war in which they killed their own with far greater efficacy than any outsider sent to assist them.

- **May 29 1864 – Civil War:** *Union troops reach Totopotomoy Creek, Virginia* » Union troops lose another foot race with the Confederates in a minor stop on the long and terrible campaign between Ulysses S. Grant’s Army of the Potomac and Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia.

During the entire month of May 1864, Grant and Lee had pounded each other in Virginia along an arc swinging from the Wilderness forest south to the James River. After fighting in the Wilderness, Grant moved south to Spotsylvania Court House to place his army between Lee and Richmond. Predicting his move, Lee marched James Longstreet's corps through the night and beat the Federals to the strategic crossroads.



For 12 days the two armies fought in some of the bloodiest combat of the war. Finally, Grant pulled out and again moved south, this time to the North Anna River, where he probed the Rebel lines on the high banks of the river, but found no weakness. He moved south again, this time to Totopotomoy Creek. Once again, Lee and his men beat him there and stood ready to defend Richmond from the Union army. Grant was getting frustrated. After the Totopotomoy, Grant slid south to Cold Harbor, just 10 miles from Richmond. His impatience may have gotten the best of him. At Cold Harbor, Grant would commit the foolish mistake of hurling his troops at well-fortified Confederates, creating a slaughter nearly unmatched during the war.

- **May 29 1916 – U.S.*Dominican Republic:** U.S. forces invade the Dominican Republic and stay until 1924.
- **May 29 1931 – Italy:** Michele Schirru, a citizen of the United States, is executed by Italian military firing squad for intent to kill Benito Mussolini.



- **May 29 1932 – Bonus Army:** *Bonus Expeditionary Force arrive in Washington* » At the height of the Great Depression, the so-called “Bonus Expeditionary Force,” a group of 1,000 World War I veterans seeking cash payments for their veterans’ bonus certificates, arrive in Washington, D.C. One month later, other veteran groups spontaneously made their way to the nation’s capital, swelling the Bonus Marchers to nearly 20,000 strong, most of them unemployed veterans in desperate financial straits. Camping in vacant government buildings and in open fields made available by District of Columbia Police Chief Pelham D. Glassford, they demanded passage of the veterans’ payment bill introduced by Representative Wright Patman.



While awaiting a vote on the issue, the veterans conducted themselves in an orderly and peaceful fashion, and on 15 JUN the Patman bill passed in the House of Representatives. However, two days later, its defeat in the Senate infuriated the marchers, who refused to return home. In an increasingly tense situation, the federal government provided money for the protesters' trip home, but 2,000 refused the offer and continued to protest. On 28 JUL, President Herbert Hoover ordered the army, under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, to evict them forcibly. MacArthur's men set their camps on fire, and the veterans were driven from the city. Hoover, increasingly regarded as insensitive to the needs of the nation's many poor, was much criticized by the public and press for the severity of his response.

- **May 29 1940 – U.S. Navy:** The first flight of the Vought F4U Corsair.
- **May 29 1945 – WW2:** *Jews in Paris are forced to sew a yellow star on their coats* » On the advice of Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, Adolf Hitler orders all Jews in occupied Paris to wear an identifying yellow star on the left side of their coats.

Joseph Goebbels had made the persecution, and ultimately the extermination, of Jews a personal priority from the earliest days of the war, often recording in his diary such statements as: "They are no longer people but beasts," and "[T]he Jews... are now being evacuated eastward. The procedure is pretty barbaric and is not to be described here more definitely. Not much will remain of the Jews."

But Goebbels was not the first to suggest this particular form of isolation. "The yellow star may make some Catholics shudder," wrote a French newspaper at the time. "It renews the most strictly Catholic tradition." Intermittently, throughout the history of the Papal States, that territory in central Italy controlled by the pope, Jews were often confined to ghettos and forced to wear either yellow hats or yellow stars.

- **May 29 1945 – WW2:** U.S. 1st Marine division conquerors Shuri-castle Okinawa.
- **May 29 1945 – WW2:** First combat mission of the Consolidated B-32 Dominator heavy bomber.
- **May 29 1972 – Vietnam War:** United States and USSR issue a joint communique » In a joint communique issued by the United States and the Soviet Union following the conclusion of summit talks with General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev during President Richard Nixon's visit to Moscow (the first visit ever by an U.S. president), both countries set forth their standard positions on Vietnam. The United States insisted that the future of South Vietnam should be left to the South Vietnamese

without interference. The Soviet Union insisted on a withdrawal of U.S. and Allied forces from South Vietnam and an end to the bombing of North Vietnam.

Despite this disagreement over the situation in Southeast Asia, Brezhnev and Nixon had reached a detente and Brezhnev did not want the Vietnam War to threaten the thawing of relations with the United States. Nixon, who had also visited China in February 1972, had hoped that the rapprochement with the Chinese and Soviets would scare North Vietnam into making concessions at the Paris peace talks. He was wrong, however, and the North Vietnamese continued to pursue the massive invasion of South Vietnam that they had launched on March 30 and proved intractable in the ongoing negotiations.

The Soviet Union had supported North Vietnam because it served Soviet interests well by keeping the United States fully occupied in an area not of crucial importance to the USSR. After the 1968 Tet Offensive, the Soviets believed for the first time that a total victory was possible, but as the fighting continued, the Soviet leaders became increasingly weary of the war. They came to believe that little more was to be gained from a war that was proving very expensive for the Soviet Union. The Soviets had supplied weapons and equipment that were used in the 1972 spring offensive, but when the Paris peace talks became deadlocked later that year, the Soviets pressured Hanoi to accept a compromise settlement with South Vietnam and the United States that was finally reached in January 1973.

- **May 29 1988 – Cold War:** *Reagan arrives in Moscow for summit talks* » President Ronald Reagan travels to Moscow to begin the fourth summit meeting held in the past three years with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Though the summit produced no major announcements or breakthroughs, it served to illuminate both the successes and the failures achieved by the two men in terms of U.S.-Soviet relations.



In May 1988, President Reagan made his first trip to Moscow to meet with Gorbachev and begin their fourth summit meeting. Just six months earlier, during a summit in Washington, D.C., in December 1987, the two men had signed the historic Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which eliminated an entire class of nuclear weapons from Europe. In many ways, Reagan's trip to Moscow in May was a journey of celebration. Demonstrating the famous Reagan charm, the president and his wife waded into crowds of Russian well-wishers and curiosity-seekers to shake hands and exchange pleasantries.

Very quickly, however, the talks between Reagan and Gorbachev revealed that serious differences still existed between the Soviet Union and the United States. From the beginning, Reagan—who had in the past referred to the Soviet Union as the “evil empire”—pressed Gorbachev on the issue of human rights. He urged Gorbachev to ease Soviet restrictions on freedom of religion and also asked that the Soviet Union relax the laws that kept many Russian Jews from emigrating. The Soviets were

obviously displeased at Reagan's insistence on lecturing them about what they considered purely internal matters. A spokesman from the Soviet Foreign Ministry showed his irritation when he declared to a group of reporters, "We don't like it when someone from outside is teaching us how to live, and this is only natural."

Despite the tension introduced by the human rights issue, the summit was largely an opportunity for Reagan and Gorbachev to trade compliments and congratulations about their accomplishments, most notably the INF Treaty. As Reagan stated after their first day of meetings, "I think the message is clear—despite clear and fundamental differences, and despite the inevitable frustrations that we have encountered, our work has begun to produce results."

- **May 29 2004 – Post WW2:** The National WW2 Memorial is dedicated in Washington, D.C.

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- **May 30 1862 – Post Civil War:** *Confederates evacuate Corinth, Mississippi* » The Confederates abandon the city of Corinth, Mississippi. After the epic struggle at Shiloh, Tennessee, in April 1862, the Confederate army, under the command of P.T. Beauregard, concentrated at Corinth, while the Union army, under Henry Halleck, began a slow advance from the Shiloh battlefield toward the rail center at Corinth. Halleck had no intention of taking on Beauregard's army directly; he was more concerned with controlling the railroad junction.



Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard



Gen. Henry W. Halleck

Beauregard was in a difficult position. Halleck, the commander of Union forces in the West, had at his disposal Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee, Don Carlos Buell's Army of the Ohio, and John Pope's Army of the Mississippi. With these forces, he had a more than two-to-one advantage over Beauregard.

Nearly a week before the evacuation, Beauregard assessed his situation with his lieutenants. Although he considered the city to be vital to the Confederacy, he also worried that his entire command could be captured or cut to pieces if a retreat was delayed. So he crafted a clever withdrawal from Corinth: His troops deployed a number of logs painted black ("Quaker guns") along his front lines to fool the Yankees into thinking they were facing substantial artillery. Meanwhile, he had his troops cook extra rations and cheer the arrival of empty boxcars to lead the Union troops to believe the Confederates were preparing for battle and receiving reinforcements.

On the night of 29 MAY, Beauregard began slipping his forces out of Corinth. On May 30, the remainder of the army left the city and burned any remaining supplies. Halleck's men entered a deserted Corinth later that day. Although an important city had been forfeited to the Union army, Beauregard's army remained intact and, with it, Confederate hopes in the West.

- **May 30 1868 – Post Civil War:** *Civil War dead honored on Decoration Day* » By proclamation of General John A. Logan of the Grand Army of the Republic, the first major Memorial Day observance is held to honor those who died “in defense of their country during the late rebellion.” Known to some as “Decoration Day,” mourners honored the Civil War dead by decorating their graves with flowers. On the first Decoration Day, General James Garfield made a speech at Arlington National Cemetery, after which 5,000 participants helped to decorate the graves of the more than 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery.



Gen. John A. Logan

Gen. James Garfield

The 1868 celebration was inspired by local observances that had taken place in various locations in the three years since the end of the Civil War. In fact, several cities claim to be the birthplace of Memorial Day, including Columbus, Mississippi; Macon, Georgia; Richmond, Virginia; Boalsburg, Pennsylvania; and Carbondale, Illinois. In 1966, the federal government, under the direction of President Lyndon B. Johnson, declared Waterloo, New York, the official birthplace of Memorial Day. They chose Waterloo—which had first celebrated the day on May 5, 1866—because the town had made Memorial Day an annual, community-wide event, during which businesses closed and residents decorated the graves of soldiers with flowers and flags.

By the late 19th century, many communities across the country had begun to celebrate Memorial Day, and after World War I, observers began to honor the dead of all of America's wars. In 1971, Congress declared Memorial Day a national holiday to be celebrated the last Monday in May. Today, Memorial Day is celebrated at Arlington National Cemetery with a ceremony in which a small American flag is placed on each grave. It is customary for the president or vice president to give a speech honoring the contributions of the dead and to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. More than 5,000 people attend the ceremony annually. Several Southern states continue to set aside a special day for honoring the Confederate dead, which is usually called Confederate Memorial Day.

- **May 30 1912 – U.S.*Nicaragua:** *First Nicaraguan Occupation 1912-1925* - U.S. Marines are sent to Nicaragua to protect American interests. The United States occupation of Nicaragua from 1912 to

1933 was part of the Banana Wars, when the US military forcefully intervened in various Latin American countries from 1898 to 1934. The formal occupation of Nicaragua began in 1912, even though there were various other assaults by the U.S. throughout this period. American military interventions in Nicaragua were designed to stop any other nation except the United States of America from building a Nicaraguan Canal. Nicaragua assumed a quasi-protectorate status under the 1916 Bryan–Chamorro Treaty. But with the onset of the Great Depression, it became too costly for the U.S. government and a withdrawal was ordered in 1933. Casualties: U.S. 5 Marines and 2 sailors killed, 16 wounded.



The USS Denver ship's landing force under Lt. A. B. Reed rests beside the Corinto, Nicaragua railroad line, 1912.

- **May 30 1958 – Memorial Day:** The remains of two unidentified American servicemen, killed in action during World War II and the Korean War respectively, are buried at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery.
- **May 30 1965 – Vietnam War:** Viet Cong offensive against U.S. base Da Nang, begins.
- **May 30 1966 – Vietnam War:** *U.S. aircraft carry out new raids* » In the largest raids since air attacks on North Vietnam began in February 1965, U.S. planes destroy five bridges, 17 railroad cars, and 20 buildings in the Thanh Hoa and Vinh areas (100 and 200 miles south of Hanoi, respectively). Others planes hit Highway 12 in four places north of the Mugia Pass and inflicted heavy damage on the Yen Bay arsenal and munitions storage area, which was located 75 miles northeast of Hanoi. A U.S. spokesman attributed the unprecedented number of planes taking part in the raids to an improvement in weather conditions.
- **May 30 1966 – Vietnam War:** *Thieu vows never to agree to a coalition government* » South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu, concluding a four-day visit to South Korea, tells reporters at a news conference that he would “never” agree to a coalition government with the National Liberation Front (NLF). Regarding the role of the NLF in possible elections, Thieu said, “If the communists are willing to lay down their weapons, abandon the communist ideology, and abandon atrocities, they could participate in elections.”



- **May 30 1990 – Cold War:** Gorbachev arrives in Washington for summit » Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev arrives in Washington, D.C., for three days of talks with President George Bush. The summit meeting centered on the issue of Germany and its place in a changing Europe.

When Gorbachev arrived for this second summit meeting with President Bush, his situation in the Soviet Union was perilous. The Soviet economy, despite Gorbachev’s many attempts at reform, was rapidly reaching a crisis point. Russia’s control over its satellites in Eastern Europe was quickly eroding, and even Russian republics such as Lithuania were pursuing paths of independence. Some U.S. observers believed that in an effort to save his struggling regime, Gorbachev might try to curry favor with hard-line elements in the Russian Communist Party. That prediction seemed to be borne out by Gorbachev’s behavior at the May 1990 summit. The main issue at the summit was Germany.



By late 1989, the Communist Party in East Germany was rapidly losing its grip on power; the Berlin Wall had come down and calls for democracy and reunification with West Germany abounded. By the time Gorbachev and Bush met in May 1990, leaders in East and West Germany were making plans for reunification. This brought about the question of a unified Germany’s role in Europe. U.S. officials argued that Germany should become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Soviets adamantly opposed this, fearful that a reunified and pro-western Germany might be a threat to Russian security. Gorbachev indicated his impatience with the U.S. argument when he declared shortly before the summit that, “The West hasn’t done much thinking,” and complained that the argument concerning German membership in NATO was “an old record that keeps playing the same note again and again.”

The Gorbachev-Bush summit ended after three days with no clear agreement on the future of Germany. Russia’s pressing economic needs, however, soon led to a breakthrough. In July 1990, Bush promised Gorbachev a large economic aid package and vowed that the German army would

remain relatively small. The Soviet leader dropped his opposition to German membership in NATO. In October 1990, East and West Germany formally reunified and shortly thereafter joined NATO.

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- **May 31 1862 – Civil War:** *Battle of Seven Pines (a.k.a. Fair Oaks) begins* » Gen. Joseph E. Johnston withdrew his army from the Virginia Peninsula toward the Confederate capital of Richmond as Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's army pursued him. By the end of May, Johnston held a defensive position seven miles east of the city on the Richmond and York River Railroad. McClellan's army facing Johnston straddled the Chickahominy River and stretched south. Capturing the initiative from his Union foe, Johnston attempted to overwhelm two Federal corps isolated south of the river. The Confederate assaults, though not well coordinated, succeeded in driving back the Fourth Corps under Brig. Gen. Erasmus Keyes and inflicted heavy casualties. Reinforcements arrived, and both sides fed more troops into the action.



Franklin's corps retreating from the Battle of Fair Oaks

Supported by Brig. Gen. Samuel P. Heintzelman's Third Corps and Brig. Gen. John Sedgwick's division of Brig. Gen. Edwin Sumner's Second Corps that crossed the rain-swollen river on Grapevine Bridge, the Federal position was finally stabilized. Johnston was seriously wounded during the action, and command of the Confederate army devolved temporarily to Maj. Gen. G.W. Smith. On June 1st, the Confederates renewed their assaults against the Federals who had brought up more reinforcements but made little headway. Both sides claimed victory but Johnston's wounding had profound influence on the war: it led to the appointment of General Robert E. Lee as Confederate commander. The more aggressive Lee initiated the Seven Days Battles, leading to a Union retreat in late June.

- **May 31 1864 – Civil War:** *Battle of Cold Harbor begins* » A disastrous defeat for the Union Army that caused some 18,000 casualties. Continuing his relentless drive toward the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, General Ulysses S. Grant ordered a frontal infantry assault on General Robert E. Lee's Confederate troops, who were now entrenched at Cold Harbor, some 10 miles northeast of Richmond. The result was Lee's last major victory of the war and a bloodbath for the Union army.
- **May 31 1900 – U.S.*China:** U.S. troops arrive in Peking to help put down the Boxer Rebellion.



U.S. Marines - Part of the international relief expedition sent to lift the siege of Peking.

- **May 31 1912 – U.S.*Cuba:** *Cuban Pacification Campaign* » U.S. Marines land on Cuba to help quell the Negro Rebellion. In the spring of 1912, revolt again flared in Cuba, and Marines were once more called to the island. On 27 May, the 2d Provisional Regiment was formed at Philadelphia and Norfolk to reinforce the 1st Provisional Regiment already in Cuba. Under the command of Colonel James E. Mahoney, the regiment sailed in several vessels of the Navy for Cuba, where Companies B, D, and E helped quell the Negro Rebellion. Within two months, peace again prevailed in the island, and on 1 August, the 2d Provisional Regiment was disbanded, and its personnel were returned onboard the USS Prairie to the United States or detached to the newly reorganized 1st Provisional Regiment in Cuba.
- **May 31 1941 –WW2:** *Germans conquer Crete* » The last of the Allies evacuate after 11 days of battling a successful German parachute invasion of the island of Crete. Crete is now Axis-occupied territory.

On the morning of 20 MAY, some 3,000 members of Germany's Division landed on Crete, which was patrolled and protected by more than 28,000 Allied troops and an almost equal number of Greek soldiers. The German invasion, although anticipated, was not taken seriously; the real fear was of an attack from the sea. Those initial 3,000 parachutists were reinforced—to the tune of an additional 19,000 men, arriving by parachute drop, glider, and troop carrier.



The Allies remained optimistic; many of the German soldiers who dropped from the sky died or were injured on impact. The rest were undersupplied and inexperienced. But by the 26 MAY, British General Bernard Freyberg, commander of the defense of Crete, already reported that their position was hopeless. Evacuation of Allied troops began on the 28th. By the night of the 31st, the last of the Allies that would make it out had left the seaport of Sphakia; 5,000 men would be left behind in the hands of the Germans. The total loss of Allied land soldiers in the Cretan engagements was 1,742; a

further 2,265 sailors were lost at sea. Three cruisers and six destroyers had been sunk. The Germans suffered a loss of about 4,000 men.

Strangely, Hitler, despite the victory, considered his “losses” too great to pursue further gains in the Mediterranean and finally drive Great Britain out of the area.

- **May 31 1962 – Post WW2:** *Architect of the Holocaust hanged in Israel* » Near Tel Aviv, Israel, Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi SS officer who organized Adolf Hitler’s “final solution of the Jewish question,” was executed for his crimes against humanity.



Eichmann was born in Solingen, Germany, in 1906. In November 1932, he joined the Nazi’s elite SS (Schutzstaffel) organization, whose members came to have broad responsibilities in Nazi Germany, including policing, intelligence, and the enforcement of Adolf Hitler’s anti-Semitic policies. Eichmann steadily rose in the SS hierarchy, and with the German annexation of Austria in 1938 he was sent to Vienna with the mission of ridding the city of Jews. He set up an efficient Jewish deportment center and in 1939 was sent to Prague on a similar mission. That year, Eichmann was appointed to the Jewish section of the SS central security office in Berlin.

In January 1942, Eichmann met with top Nazi officials at the Wannsee Conference near Berlin for the purpose of planning a “final solution of the Jewish question,” as Nazi leader Hermann Goering put it. The Nazis decided to exterminate Europe’s Jewish population. Eichmann was appointed to coordinate the identification, assembly, and transportation of millions of Jews from occupied Europe to the Nazi death camps, where Jews were gassed or worked to death. He carried this duty out with horrifying efficiency, and between three to four million Jews perished in the extermination camps before the end of World War II. Close to two million were executed elsewhere.

Following the war, Eichmann was captured by U.S. troops, but he escaped a prison camp in 1946 before having to face the Nuremberg International War Crimes Tribunal. Eichmann traveled under an assumed identity between Europe and the Middle East, and in 1950 he arrived in Argentina, which maintained lax immigration policies and was a safe haven for many Nazi war criminals. In 1957, a German prosecutor secretly informed Israel that Eichmann was living in Argentina. Agents from Israel’s intelligence service, the Mossad, were deployed to Argentina, and in early 1960 they finally located Eichmann; he was living in the San Fernando section of Buenos Aires under the name of Ricardo Klement.

In May 1960, Argentina was celebrating the 150th anniversary of its revolution against Spain, and many tourists were traveling to Argentina from abroad to attend the festivities. The Mossad used the

opportunity to smuggle more agents into the country. Israel, knowing that Argentina might never extradite Eichmann for trial, had decided to abduct him and take him to Israel illegally. On 11 MAY, Mossad operatives descended on Garibaldi Street in San Fernando and snatched Eichmann away as he was walking from the bus to his home. His family called local hospitals but not the police, and Argentina knew nothing of the operation. On May 20, a drugged Eichmann was flown out of Argentina disguised as an Israeli airline worker who had suffered head trauma in an accident. Three days later, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion announced that Eichmann was in Israeli custody.

Argentina demanded Eichmann's return, but Israel argued that his status as an international war criminal gave them the right to proceed with a trial. On April 11, 1961, Eichmann's trial began in Jerusalem. It was the first televised trial in history. Eichmann faced 15 charges, including crimes against humanity, crimes against the Jewish people, and war crimes. He claimed he was just following orders, but the judges disagreed, finding him guilty on all counts on December 15 and sentencing him to die. On May 31, 1962, he was hanged near Tel Aviv. His body was cremated and his ashes thrown into the sea.

- **May 31 1962 – Vietnam War:** *Operation Rolling Thunder continues* » U.S. planes bomb an ammunition depot at Hoi Jan, west of Hanoi, and try again to drop the Than Hoa highway bridge. These raids were part of Operation Rolling Thunder, which had begun in March 1965. President Lyndon B. Johnson had ordered the sustained bombing of North Vietnam to interdict North Vietnamese transportation routes in the southern part of North Vietnam and slow infiltration of personnel and supplies into South Vietnam. In July 1966, Rolling Thunder was expanded to include North Vietnamese ammunition dumps and oil storage facilities as targets. In the spring of 1967, it was further expanded to include power plants, factories, and airfields in the Hanoi-Haiphong area.



540 ft Thanh Hóa Bridge after it was hit by laser-guided bombs in 1972

The White House closely controlled operation Rolling Thunder and President Johnson occasionally selected the targets himself. From 1965 to 1968, about 643,000 tons of bombs were dropped on North Vietnam. A total of nearly 900 U.S. aircraft were lost during Operation Rolling Thunder. The operation continued, with occasional suspensions, until President Johnson halted it on October 31, 1968, under increasing domestic political pressure.

- **May 31 1970 – Vietnam War:** *Communist soldiers escape South Vietnamese forces* » About 75 communist soldiers who had seized key outposts in the city of Dalat, 145 miles northeast of Saigon, manage to slip past 2,500 South Vietnamese militiamen and soldiers who had surrounded their positions. In earlier fighting, 47 communist soldiers were reported killed; South Vietnamese reported that 16 soldiers were killed and 2 were wounded.

[Source: <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history> & <https://www.historycentral.com> | April 2019
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