



Military History Anniversaries 1 thru 15 December

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

- **Dec 01 1779 - American Revolution:** General George Washington’s army settles into a second season at Morristown, New Jersey. Washington’s personal circumstances improved dramatically as he moved into the Ford Mansion and was able to conduct his military business in the style of a proper 18th-century gentleman. However, the worst winter of the 1700s coupled with the collapse of the colonial economy ensured misery for Washington’s underfed, poorly clothed and unpaid troops as they struggled for the next two months to construct their 1,000-plus “log-house city” from 600 acres of New Jersey woodland.
- **Dec 01 1862 - Civil War:** *Lincoln’s State of the Union address* » President Abraham Lincoln addresses the U.S. Congress and speaks some of his most memorable words as he discusses the Northern war effort. Lincoln used the address to present a moderate message concerning his policy towards slavery. Just 10 weeks before, he had issued his Emancipation Proclamation, which declared that slaves in territories still in rebellion as of January 1, 1863, would be free. The measure was not welcomed by everyone in the North—it met with considerable resistance from conservative Democrats who did not want to fight a war to free slaves. The November 1862 elections were widely interpreted as a condemnation of the emancipation plan. The Democrats won the New York governorship and 34 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, though the Republicans gained five Senate seats and maintained control of most state legislatures. Lincoln used the State of the Union address to present a more moderate position on emancipation. He mentioned gradual, compensated emancipation of slaves, which many moderates and conservatives desired, but he also asserted that the slaves liberated thus far by Union armies would remain forever free.

Lincoln’s closing paragraph was a statement on the trials of the time: “The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present...fellow citizens, we cannot escape history...The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union...In giving freedom to the slave, we ensure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last, best hope of earth.”

- **Dec 01 1918 – WWI:** An American army of occupation enters Germany.

- **Dec 01 1919 – WWI:** *New state declared in the Balkans* » Three weeks after the armistice, and on the same day that Allied troops cross into Germany for the first time, a new state is proclaimed in Belgrade, Serbia. As the great Austrian and German empires were brought low in defeat, the new “Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes” sprung to life, bolstered by the League of Nations promised support for Europe’s minority populations. Included in the new state were 500,000 Hungarians and an equal number of Germans, as well as tens of thousands of Romanians, Albanians, Bulgarians and Italians. Crown Prince Alexander, the son of the ailing king of Serbia who had commanded Serbian armies in the Great War, was named regent of the provisional government of the new state. In 1921, with the support of the Serbian representatives in the government and against the opposition of Croatian federalists, who favored a broader distribution of power, a new constitution was put into effect that created a strong central government; Alexander became king after his father died that same year.

Tensions continued to mount with the Serbian-dominated government’s denial of autonomy to different ethnic groups, notably the Croats and Slovenes, and in the summer of 1928, in response to the fatal shooting of the Croatian leader Stjepan Radić and two colleagues by a Montenegrin deputy in the national parliament, the Croats withdrew from parliament and organized a separatist regime based in Zagreb. In January 1929, with the nation on the brink of civil war, Alexander suspended the constitution, dissolved the parliament and all political parties, and took dictatorial control of the country. As part of his effort to impose national unity on the country’s warring ethnic groups, he renamed the country Yugoslavia. Conflict continued to simmer in the Balkans, however, and in 1934, Alexander was assassinated by extreme right-wing Croatian nationalists during a state visit to Marseilles, France. His son, Peter, managed to maintain unity until 1941, when the German army invaded Serbia and Croatia declared its independence.

- **Dec 01 1921 – U.S. Navy:** As the snow ended on Dec. 5, the Navy’s C-7 blimp arrived over Washington from its home base at Hampton Roads. It was the first flight of the helium-filled blimp and by all accounts it was a huge success. After a brief stop at the air field, the blimp lifted off again and made one more circle over Washington before flying south, bound for a return flight to Hampton Roads.



- **Dec 01 1941 – WW2:** Emperor Hirohito of Japan gave the final approval to initiate war against the United States.
- **Dec 01 1944 – WW2:** *Stettinius succeeds Hull as secretary of state* » Edward R. Stettinius Jr. becomes Franklin Roosevelt’s last secretary of state by filling the Cabinet spot left empty by the Cordell

Hull. Hull had served as FDR's secretary of state for 11 years and retired after Roosevelt's unprecedented election to a fourth term as president, in November 1944. Hull earned a reputation for negotiating extensive changes in U.S. tariff and trade practices, calling for the lowering of prohibitive tariff rates that choked U.S. foreign trade for decades and pushing Congress to pass legislation that would grant "most favored nation status" to qualified nations—a forerunner to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) agreement. It was Hull who pursued closer relations with Latin America, promoting the Good Neighbor Policy that promised an end to U.S. intervention in the internal affairs of its southern neighbors. This had the effect of undoing decades of distrust between the United States and Central and South America and was essential to creating a united pan-American front against the fascist powers of Europe. Hull was less conciliatory toward Japan, refusing any relaxation of economic embargos against the Axis power until it had completely withdrawn from China and Southeast Asia.

In November 1944, having enjoyed the longest tenure of any secretary of state, and in failing health, Hull retired to devote his time to the creation of an international peace organization, which would become the United Nations. Needless to say, these were big shoes for Stettinius to fill. The industrialist, who had worked for General Motors and U.S. Steel, left private enterprise to join the war effort, accepting the chairmanship of the War Resources Board in 1939. In 1940, he went on to chair the National Defense Advisory Commission and a year later became supervisor of the Lend-Lease program, which distributed cash and war materiel to U.S. allies fighting the European war. In 1943, FDR appointed Stettinius undersecretary of state, and he finally replaced Secretary of State Hull upon Hull's retirement.

Stettinius' tenure in that Cabinet post was unremarkable, consisting mostly of implementing a foreign policy to which he contributed little in the way of original ideas. He did play an advisory role to FDR's participation at the Yalta Conference in 1945. Stettinius, like his predecessor, believed in the necessity of a postwar international peace organization and headed the U.S. delegation to the San Francisco conference that drafted the U.N. Charter. Shortly after FDR's death, Harry S. Truman replaced Stettinius with James F. Byrnes, leaving Stettinius to become chairman of the first U.S. delegation to the United Nations. It was Cordell Hull, however, who would win the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in the creation of the United Nations.

- **Dec 01 1952 – Cold War:** *The 1st H Bomb test held* » The United States detonated the world's first hydrogen bomb on a large atoll called Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands in the South Pacific (190 miles west of the more famous Bikini Atoll) as a part of Operation Ivy.



Previously in September of 1949, the Soviet Union had detonated its atomic bomb, prompting the United States to increase efforts to develop an even greater thermonuclear weapon to surpass the capacity of the Soviets. The creation and detonation of the first hydrogen bomb on the Eniwetok atoll allowed the United States to temporarily step ahead of the Soviets during the arms race. Overall there were 43 nuclear tests conducted at Eniwetok from 1948 to 1958. H-bombs, which get their power from fusion, are about 1000 times more powerful than atomic bombs, which derive their force from fission.

- **Dec 01 1959 – Cold War:** *Antarctica made a military-free continent* » Twelve nations, including the United States and the Soviet Union, sign the Antarctica Treaty, which bans military activity and weapons testing on that continent. It was the first arms control agreement signed in the Cold War period. Since the 1800s a number of nations, including Great Britain, Australia, Chile, and Norway, laid claim to parts of Antarctica. These competing claims led to diplomatic disputes and even armed clashes. In 1948, Argentine military forces fired on British troops in an area claimed by both nations. Incidents of that sort, together with evidence that the Soviet Union was becoming more interested in Antarctica, spurred the United States to propose that the continent be made a trustee of the United Nations. This idea was rejected when none of the other nations with interests on the continent would agree to cede their claims of sovereignty to an international organization.

By the 1950s, some officials in the United States began to press for a more active U.S. role in Antarctica, believing that the continent might have military potential as an area for nuclear tests. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, however, took a different approach. U.S. diplomats, working with their Soviet counterparts, hammered out a treaty that set aside Antarctica as a military-free zone and postponed settling territorial claims for future debate. There could be no military presence on the continent, and no testing of weapons of any sort, including nuclear weapons. Scientific ventures were allowed, and scientists would not be prohibited from traveling through any of the areas claimed by various nations. A dozen nations signed the document. Since the treaty did not directly tamper with issues of territorial sovereignty in Antarctica, the signers included all nations with territorial claims on the continent. As such, the treaty marked a small but significant first step toward U.S.-Soviet arms control and political cooperation. The treaty went into effect in June 1961, and set the standard for the basic policies that continue to govern Antarctica.

- **Dec 01 1964 – Vietnam War:** *Johnson Administration makes plans to bomb North Vietnam* » In two crucial meetings (on this day and two days later) at the White House, President Lyndon B. Johnson and his top-ranking advisers agree, after some debate, to a two-phase bombing plan for North Vietnam.

Phase I would involve air strikes by Air Force and Navy jets against infiltration routes and facilities in the Laotian panhandle. Phase II would extend the air strikes to a larger selection of targets in North Vietnam. The more “hawkish” advisers—particularly the Joint Chiefs of Staff—preferred a more immediate and intensive series of raids against many targets in North Vietnam, while “dovish” advisers questioned whether bombing was going to have any effect on Hanoi’s support of the war. Johnson agreed with the Joint Chiefs on the necessity of bombing, but wanted to take a more gradual and measured approach. When he agreed to the bombing plan, President Johnson made it clear that South Vietnamese leaders would be expected to cooperate and pull their government and people together if they hoped to receive additional aid from the United States. Johnson was concerned that the continuing

political instability in Saigon would have a detrimental effect on the South Vietnamese government's ability to pursue the fight against the communist Viet Cong.

- **Dec 01 1969 – Vietnam War:** America's first draft lottery since 1942 is held.



Rep. Alexander Pirnie, R-NY, draws the first capsule in the lottery drawing held on December 1, 1969. The capsule contained the date, September 14.

- **Dec 01 1971 – Vietnam War:** *Situation in Cambodia worsens* » In Cambodia, communist fighters renew their assaults on government positions, forcing the retreat of Cambodian government forces from Kompong Thmar and nearby Ba Ray, six miles northeast of Phnom Penh. Premier Lon Nol and his troops had been locked in a desperate battle with the communist Khmer Rouge and their North Vietnamese allies for control of Cambodia since 1970, when Nol had taken over the government from Prince Norodom Sihanouk. The communist forces had just launched a major offensive and the government troops were reeling under the new attacks. By 2 DEC, the North Vietnamese overran Cambodian forces trying to protect Route 6, one of the key road links between Phnom Penh and the interior. The communists gained control of a 30-mile stretch of Route 6, cutting off thousands of refugees and nearly 10,000 government troops in the northern Kompong Thmar area.

On 6 DEC, Hanoi radio reported that the Cambodian government had lost 12,000 fighting men in the past week's action. The next day, communist gunners renewed their shelling of Phnom Penh, firing three rockets into the capital and eight rockets into the international airport. As the rockets fell, the Communists troops attacked government positions all around the city and by December 11, Lon Nol's forces were in imminent danger of being encircled by the Khmer Rouge, as the communists tried to isolate Phnom Penh from the rest of the country and outside support. With most of the government forces tied down and fighting for their lives, the North Vietnamese were free to use their sanctuaries and resupply routes in Cambodia to begin building up for a major offensive they were planning in South Vietnam for the spring of 1972.

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- **Dec 02 1777 – American Revolution:** Legend has it that on the night of December 2, 1777, Philadelphia housewife and nurse Lydia Darragh single-handedly saves the lives of General George Washington and his Continental Army when she overhears the British planning a surprise attack on Washington's army for the following day.

- **Dec 02 1823 – Monroe Doctrine:** During his annual address to Congress, President James Monroe proclaims a new U.S. foreign policy initiative that becomes known as the “Monroe Doctrine.” Primarily the work of Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, the Monroe Doctrine forbade European interference in the American hemisphere but also asserted U.S. neutrality in regard to future European conflicts.
- **Dec 02 1864 – Civil War:** Confederate General Archibald Gracie Jr. while looking at the Union lines through his telescope during the siege of Petersburg Virginia is killed in the trenches at when an artillery shell explodes near him.



- **Dec 02 1899 – Philippine-American War:** The Battle of Tirad Pass, termed "The Filipino Thermopylae", is fought. Casualties and losses: US 11 ~ RP 52.
- **Dec 02 1917 – WWI:** A day after Bolsheviks seize control of Russian military headquarters at Mogilev, a formal ceasefire is proclaimed throughout the battle zone between Russia and the Central Powers.
- **Dec 02 1941 – WW2:** Enrico Fermi, the Italian-born Nobel Prize-winning physicist, directs and controls the first nuclear chain reaction in his laboratory beneath the bleachers of Stagg Field at the University of Chicago, ushering in the nuclear age.
- **Dec 02 1942 – WW2:** During the Manhattan Project, a team led by Enrico Fermi initiates the first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction ushering in the nuclear age.
- **Dec 02 1943 – WW2:** Mustard Gas disaster in Bari harbor » A German reconnaissance aircraft discovered that the port of Bari, on the Adriatic coast of Italy was ‘full’ of Allied shipping. A bombing raid was organized and hit the port in the early evening. It was remarkably successful –sinking or destroying 28 cargo and transport ships in a surprise attack. The effects were amplified because two ammunition ships were hit, causing shattering explosions that broke windows seven miles away. A petrol pipeline in harbor was hit, spilling large quantities of burning fuel into the harbor area. Most seriously the Liberty ship John Harvey – carrying a secret cargo of 2,000 WWI mustard gas bombs – was hit.



John Harvey

The John Harvey's cargo was known to very few people. It was part of the Allied supply of chemical weapons that was maintained to be used in retaliation for any such German attack. Those dealing with the casualties were not aware of this additional hazard, or of how to treat those affected. Nor did they know how to treat the many Italian civilians who were affected by the mustard gas cloud that hung over the harbor area.

- **Dec 02 1944 – WW2:** General George S. Patton's troops enter the Saar Valley and break through the Siegfried line.
- **Dec 02 1950 – Korea:** *Battle of the Ch'ongch'on River (25 NOV – 02 DEC)* » This decisive battle, also known as the Battle of the Ch'ongch'on, took place along the Ch'ongch'on River Valley in the northwestern part of North Korea. In response to the successful Chinese First Phase Campaign against the United Nations (UN) forces, General Douglas MacArthur launched the Home-by-Christmas Offensive to expel the Chinese forces from Korea and to end the war. Anticipating this reaction, the Chinese People's Volunteer Army (PVA) Commander Peng Dehuai planned a counteroffensive, dubbed the "Second Phase Campaign", against the advancing UN forces.

Hoping to repeat the success of the earlier First Phase Campaign, the PVA 13th Army first launched a series of surprise attacks along the Ch'ongch'on River Valley on the night of 25 NOV at the western half of the Second Phase Campaign, effectively destroying the Eighth United States Army's right flank while allowing PVA forces to move rapidly into UN rear areas. In the subsequent battles and withdrawals over the next 7 days, the US Eighth Army managed to avoid being surrounded by PVA forces, although the PVA 13th Army were still able to inflict heavy losses onto the retreating UN forces which had lost all cohesion. In the aftermath of the battle, the US Eighth Army's heavy losses forced all UN forces to retreat from North Korea to the 38th Parallel.

- **Dec 02 1961 – Cold War:** Following a year of severely strained relations between the United States and Cuba, Cuban leader Fidel Castro openly declares that he is a Marxist-Leninist. The announcement sealed the bitter Cold War animosity between the two nations.
- **Dec 02 1962 – Vietnam War:** After a trip to Vietnam at the request of U.S. President John F. Kennedy, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield becomes the first American official to comment adversely on the war's progress.

- **Dec 03 1762 – Pre American Revolution:** France cedes to Spain all lands west of the Mississippi—the territory known as Upper Louisiana.
- **Dec 03 1775 – U.S. Navy:** The USS Alfred, formerly a merchant vessel called Black Prince, became the first vessel to fly the Grand Union Flag (the precursor to the Stars and Stripes); the flag is hoisted by John Paul Jones.



- **Dec 03 1776 – American Revolution:** *Washington arrives at the banks of the Delaware* » In a letter dated December 3, 1776, General George Washington writes to Congress from his headquarters in Trenton, New Jersey, to report that he had transported much of the Continental Army's stores and baggage across the Delaware River to Pennsylvania. In his letter Washington wrote, Immediately on my arrival here, I ordered the removal of all the military and other stores and baggage over the Delaware, a great quantity are already got over, and as soon as the boats come up from Philadelphia, we shall load them, by which means I hope to have everything secured this night and tomorrow if we are not disturbed.

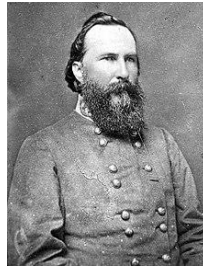
Washington then made the critical strategic move of confiscating and burning all the boats along the Delaware to prevent British troops from pursuing his beleaguered forces across the river. The British strategy of chasing Washington across New Jersey, rather than capturing his entire army in Manhattan, seemed to be a stroke of genius. As New Jersey was devastated at the hands of British forces and Washington's men covered in Pennsylvania, even staunch Patriots, including Thomas Jefferson, considered surrender to the crown.



- **Dec 03 1776 – American Revolution:** General Washington received a letter dated November 30 from his second-in-command, General Charles Lee, reporting that he was about to cross into New York near Peekskill on this day in 1776. In an apt reflection of the state of the American fortunes, the British captured General Lee nine days later in New Jersey. Richard Stockton, a leading New Jersey patriot

and signer of the Declaration of Independence, was also in British custody and was forced to swear an oath of allegiance to the British king along with thousands of his New Jersey neighbors.

- **Dec 03 1862 – Civil War:** Confederate raiders attack a Federal forage train on the Hardin Pike near Nashville, Tenn.
- **Dec 03 1863 – Civil War:** Confederate General James Longstreet moves his army east and north toward Greeneville. This withdrawal marks the end of the Fall Campaign in Tennessee.



- **Dec 03 1863 – Civil War:** Major General William Tecumseh Sherman meets with slight resistance from Confederate troops at Thomas Station on his march to the sea.
- **Dec 03 1912 – Pre WWI:** *First Balkan War ends* » Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro sign an armistice with Turkey, ending the first Balkan War. During the two-month conflict, a military coalition between Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro—known as the Balkan League—expelled Turkey from all the Ottoman Empire’s former European possessions, with the exception of Constantinople (now Istanbul). In January 1913, a coup d’etat in Turkey led to a resumption of fighting, but the Balkan League was again victorious.

In 1913, the Second Balkan War began after Serbia and Greece demanded that Bulgaria cede to them portions of Macedonia. Serbia and Greece formed an alliance against Bulgaria, and Macedonia was partitioned between the victors. Nationalist tension persisted in the Balkans, and Serbia was particularly bitter about being forced to give up some of its conquests by the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

On June 28, 1914, hostility between Serbia and Austria-Hungary over Austria’s possession of Bosnia-Herzegovina reached a breaking point when Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Austria-Hungary blamed the Serbian government for the attack and hoped to use the incident as justification for settling the problem of Serbian nationalism once and for all. However, as Russia supported Serbia, an Austro-Hungarian declaration of war was delayed until its leaders received assurances from German leader Kaiser Wilhelm that Germany would support their cause in the event of a Russian intervention.

On 28 JUL, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and the tenuous peace between Europe’s great powers collapsed. Within a week, Russia, Belgium, France, Great Britain, and Serbia had lined up against Austria-Hungary and Germany, and World War I had begun.

- **Dec 03 1915 – Pre WWI:** The United States expels German attaches on spy charges.

- **Dec 03 1916 – WWI:** *Nivelle replaces Joffre as French commander* » As part of a general upheaval within the French government and military due in part to demoralizing losses at Verdun and the Somme, the formidable General Joseph-Jacques-Césaire Joffre is dismissed as commander in chief of the French forces in favor of General Robert Nivelle.



Joffre

Nivelle

French authorities blamed Joffre, the stalwart champion of France's Plan XVII military strategy since 1911, for recent defeats on the Western Front as well as for the situation in the eastern Mediterranean, where some 500,000 Allied troops based out of the Greek port city of Salonika were mired in what they feared might be a losing struggle with Bulgarian forces. For his part, Nivelle believed an aggressive offensive was the key to a breakthrough on the Western Front. The French government felt pressure to take some action to counter the Germans' declaration of unrestricted U-boat warfare; they were also swayed by the support Nivelle enjoyed from their counterparts in Britain, including the new prime minister, David Lloyd George.

In early April 1917, then, French and British troops embarked on what would become known as the Nivelle Offensive, hoping to quickly and decisively punch a hole through the German lines in France. All did not go as planned, however, as the strength and depth of the German positions, built up since the fall of 1914, proved too much for the Allies. By the end of the first day, almost all the French tanks, introduced into battle for the first time, had been destroyed or had become bogged down, and within a week the hospitals in the area were treating 96,000 wounded. The battle was called off on April 20.

The contrast between Nivelle's lofty objectives and the reality of the offensive's disappointing outcome caused great disillusionment and anger among the French troops. A series of mutinies began in late April 1917 and increased in the two succeeding months, eventually involving about 40,000 troops. Nivelle had cut soldiers' leave time in March, only releasing 5 percent of the French army at a time. In July, Nivelle was replaced by Philippe Pétain, who increased the leave time given to each soldier to 13 percent, or ten days leave every four months, in an effort to curb discontent and offer the French troops some much-needed time to rest and recuperate.

- **Dec 03 1918 – Post WWI:** The Allied Conference ends in London where they decide that Germany must pay for the war.
- **Dec 03 1926 – Pre WWII:** British reports claim that German soldiers are being trained in the Soviet Union.
- **Dec 03 1942 – WW2:** U.S. planes make the first raids on Naples, Italy.

- **Dec 03 1944 – WW2:** *Civil war breaks out in Athens* » A civil war breaks out in Athens as communist guerillas battle democratic forces for control of a liberated Greece. Germany had occupied Greece to bail out Italy after Italy's failed invasion threatened to leave Greece open to Allied occupation. When Germany arrived, various Greek resistance forces gave battle, but two stood out as particularly important: a communist-backed resistance movement called the National Liberation Front, and a liberal, democratic movement called the Greek Democratic National Army.

While both of these factions operated from different ideological frameworks, they nevertheless occasionally cooperated in fighting the common German enemy. By early 1944 though, the communist-backed National Liberation Front had taken to the hills to create a provisional government, rejecting the legitimacy of both the Greek king and his government-in-exile. It also disregarded the one remaining rival for ultimate political supremacy in Greece—the Democratic National Army.

When Germany was forced to withdraw from Greece in October 1944, victorious British forces brought together the communist and democratic factions in order to establish a coalition government. But this government collapsed after the communist Liberation Front refused to disband its guerrilla forces. So, on December 3 war broke out between the communists and the democrats—with the National Liberation Front taking control of most of Greece, with the exception of the capital and Salonika.

The British fought against the communists with the Democratic National Army, which began to move more and more to the right politically as it struggled for survival and support. By February 1945, the National Liberation Front was forced to surrender and disband its guerilla army. One month later, a general election was held, and the democrats, now also royalists, won control of the government. The communists refrained from voting altogether, preferring to bide their time. When a plebiscite elected the Greek king back to his throne in September of the same year, the communists emerged from underground and civil war broke out again. By this time, Britain, fed up and exhausted, left the negotiation for peace to the United States, which employed the Truman Doctrine of giving massive amounts of foreign aid to governments pledged to democracy in order to keep them out of the communist/Soviet orbit. It took time, but eventually the rejuvenated—and well-funded—Greek democrats were victorious.

- **Dec 03 1950 – Korean War:** The Chinese close in on Pyongyang, Korea, and UN forces withdraw southward. Pyongyang falls 2 days later.



- **Dec 03 1962 – Vietnam War:** *Report maintains that Viet Cong are prepared for a long war* » Roger Hilsman, director of the State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research, sends a memorandum

to Secretary of State Dean Rusk pointing out that the communist Viet Cong fighters are obviously prepared for a long struggle.

While government control of the countryside had improved slightly, the Viet Cong had expanded considerably in size and influence, both through its own efforts and because of its attraction to “increasingly frustrated non-communist, anti-Diem elements.” According to Hilsman, successfully eradicating the Viet Cong would take several years of greater effort by both the United States and the South Vietnamese government of President Ngo Dinh Diem. Real success, he noted, depended upon Diem gaining the support of the South Vietnamese people through social and military measures, which he had so far failed to implement. Hilsman felt that a noncommunist coup against Diem “could occur at any time,” and would seriously disrupt or reverse counterinsurgency momentum. As it turned out, Hilsman was eventually proven correct.

On November 1, 1963, dissident South Vietnamese generals led a coup resulting in the murder of Diem. His death marked the end of civilian authority and political stability in South Vietnam. The succession of military juntas, coups, and attempted coups in 1964 and early 1965 weakened the government severely and disrupted the momentum of the counterinsurgency effort against the Viet Cong.

- **Dec 03 1965 – Vietnam War:** *Memorandum outlines terms for bombing halt* » In a confidential memorandum to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton outlines the terms that should precede any permanent bombing halt. He said that North Vietnam must not only cease infiltration efforts, but also take steps to withdraw troops currently operating in South Vietnam. In addition, the Viet Cong should agree to terminate terror and sabotage activities and allow Saigon to exercise “governmental functions over substantially all of South Vietnam.” McNaughton did not believe that these conditions would soon be obtained, however, as they amounted to “capitulation by a communist force that is far from beaten.”
- **Dec 03 1977 – Vietnam War:** The State Department proposes the admission of 10,000 more Vietnamese refugees to the United States.
- **Dec 03 1989 – Cold War:** *Bush and Gorbachev suggest Cold War is coming to an end* » Meeting off the coast of Malta, President George Bush and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev issue statements strongly suggesting that the long-standing animosities at the core of the Cold War might be coming to an end. Commentators in both the United States and Russia went farther and declared that the Cold War was over.



The talks were part of the first-ever summit held between the two leaders. Bush and his advisers were cautiously optimistic about the summit, eager to follow up on the steps toward arms control taken by the preceding Reagan administration. Gorbachev was quite vocal about his desire for better relations with the United States so that he could pursue his domestic reform agenda and was more effusive in his declarations that the talks marked an important first step toward ending the Cold War. The Russian leader stated, “The characteristics of the Cold War should be abandoned.” He went on to suggest that, “The arms race, mistrust, psychological and ideological struggle, all those should be things of the past.” Bush was somewhat more restrained in his statement: “With reform underway in the Soviet Union, we stand at the threshold of a brand-new era of U.S.-Soviet relations. It is within our grasp to contribute each in our own way to overcoming the division of Europe and ending the military confrontation there.”

Despite the positive spin of the rhetoric, though, little of substance was accomplished during the summit. Both sides agreed to work toward a treaty dealing with long-range nuclear weapons and conventional arms in 1990. Gorbachev and Bush also agreed that another summit would take place in June 1990, in Washington, D.C.

- **Dec 03 1997 – Ottawa Treaty:** Representatives of 121 nations sign the Ottawa Treaty prohibiting the manufacture or deployment of antipersonnel landmines; the People’s Republic of China, the US and the USSR do not sign.

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- **Dec 04 1780 – American Revolution:** *Washington's cousin tricks Loyalists* » A force of Continental dragoons commanded by Colonel William Washington—General George Washington’s second cousin once removed—corners Loyalist Colonel Rowland Rugeley and his followers in Rugeley’s house and barn near Camden, South Carolina.

After nearly a year of brutal backcountry conflict between Washington and the fierce British commander Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton (who was infamous for Tarleton’s Quarter, the murder of colonial POWs on 29 MAY at Waxhaws), Washington had retreated to North Carolina the previous October. Commanded to return to the South Carolina theater by Brigadier General Daniel The Old Wagoner Morgan, Colonel Washington still lacked the proper artillery to dislodge the Loyalists. He told his cavalymen to dismount and surround the barn. While out of Rugeley’s sight, Washington’s men fabricated a pine log to resemble a cannon.



This Quaker gun trick, named so because Quakers used it to be intimidating without breaching their pacifist vow of non-violence, worked beautifully. Washington faced the cannon toward the buildings

in which the Loyalists had barricaded themselves and threatened bombardment if they did not surrender. Shortly after, Rugeley surrendered his entire force without a single shot being fired.

When informed of the pacifist victory, General Charles Cornwallis, commander of the British armies in America, informed Tarleton that Rugeley's performance ensured he would never rise to the rank of brigadier. A few weeks later, Tarleton would himself face an even worse humiliation at the hands of General Morgan during the devastating Battle of Cowpens. The harrowing civil war for the hearts and minds of the Carolina backcountry had finally begun to favor the Patriots.

- **Dec 04 1783 – American Revolution:** *Washington bids farewell to his officers* » Future President George Washington, then commanding general of the Continental Army, summons his military officers to Fraunces Tavern in New York City to inform them that he will be resigning his commission and returning to civilian life.

Washington had led the army through six long years of war against the British before the American forces finally prevailed at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781. There, Washington received the formal surrender of British General Lord Charles Cornwallis, effectively ending the Revolutionary War, although it took almost two more years to conclude a peace treaty and slightly longer for all British troops to leave New York.

Although Washington had often during the war privately lamented the sorry state of his largely undisciplined and unhealthy troops and the ineffectiveness of most of his officer corps, he expressed genuine appreciation for his brotherhood of soldiers on this day in 1783. Observers of the intimate scene at Fraunces Tavern described Washington as “suffused in tears,” embracing his officers one by one after issuing his farewell. Washington left the tavern for Annapolis, Maryland, where he officially resigned his commission on December 23. He then returned to his beloved estate at Mount Vernon, Virginia, where he planned to live out his days as a gentleman farmer.

Washington was not out of the public spotlight for long, however. In 1789, he was coaxed out of retirement and elected as the first president of the United States, a position he held until 1797.



- **Dec 04 1862 – Civil War:** Winchester, Va., falls into Union hands, resulting in the capture of 145 Southern soldiers.
- **Dec 04 1863 – Civil War:** Seven solid days of bombardment ends at Charleston, S.C. The Union fires some 1,307 rounds.
- **Dec 04 1864 – Civil War:** *Engagement ends at Waynesboro* » Eight days of cavalry clashes in Georgia come to an end when Union General Judson Kilpatrick and Confederate General Joseph

Wheeler skirmish for a final time at Waynesboro. Although the Rebels inflicted more than three times as many casualties as the Yankees, the campaign was considered a success by the Union because it screened Wheeler from the main Union force as it marched to Savannah, Georgia, on General William T. Sherman's famous March to the Sea.



Kilpatrick & Wheeler

Sherman marched his army across Georgia in November and December of 1864, destroying nearly everything in their path. Sherman sent Kilpatrick to Waynesboro in the hope that the Union cavalry could threaten nearby Augusta, Georgia, and divert Confederate attention from Sherman's true goal, Savannah. Beginning on November 27, Wheeler pursued Kilpatrick between Waynesboro and Millen, the site of a Confederate prison that Kilpatrick hoped to liberate. During the campaign, Wheeler pecked at Kilpatrick's force and nearly captured the Union commander in an early morning raid.

The last of the fighting came in Waynesboro. With Sherman's army safely past, Kilpatrick evacuated the area. Wheeler killed or wounded some 830 Yankee troopers and lost only 240 of his own. Kilpatrick found the prison near Millen evacuated, but the campaign had achieved the true Union objective: Sherman marched unmolested to the sea.

- **Dec 04 1914 – Pre WW1:** The first Seaplane Unit formed by the German Navy officially comes into existence and begins operations from Zeebrugge, Belgium.
- **Dec 04 1918 – WW1:** *President Wilson travels to Europe* » President Woodrow Wilson departs Washington, D.C., on the first European trip by a U.S. president. After nine days at sea aboard the S.S. George Washington, Wilson arrived at Brest, France, and traveled by land to Versailles, where he headed the American delegation to the peace conference seeking an official end to World War I.

Although the president's political opponents criticized his European visit as a sign of egotism, Wilson worked tirelessly during the proceedings to orchestrate an agreement that would encourage a lasting peace in Europe. During the stay, Wilson also led the effort for the establishment of the League of Nations, an international organization designed to seek diplomatic solutions to future conflicts.

At Versailles, Wilson's hopes for a "just and stable peace" were opposed by the other victorious Allies, and the final treaty, which called for stiff war reparations from the former Central Powers, was regarded with increasing bitterness in Germany. President Woodrow Wilson was awarded the 1920 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to bring peace to Europe.

- **Dec 04 1941 – WW2:** Operation Taifun (Typhoon), which was launched by the German armies on October 2, 1941 as a prelude to taking Moscow, is halted because of freezing temperatures and a lack of serviceable aircraft.
- **Dec 04 1942 – WW2:** U.S. planes make the first raids on Naples, Italy.
- **Dec 04 1942 – WW2:** *Carlson's patrol during the Guadalcanal Campaign ends* » In the operation, the 2nd Raiders attacked forces under the command of Toshinari Shōji, which were escaping from an attempted encirclement in the Koli Point area on Guadalcanal and attempting to rejoin other Japanese army units on the opposite side of the U.S. Lunga perimeter. During the 29 days of the patrol, Carlson's raiders hiked approximately 150 miles to cover a straight-line distance of about 40 miles from Aola Bay to the Matanikau River. Carlson claimed that his troops killed 488 Japanese soldiers and captured or destroyed large amounts of equipment, including two howitzers and various small arms and ammunition.



- **Dec 04 1942 – WW2:** *Polish Christians come to the aid of Polish Jews* » In Warsaw, a group of Polish Christians put their own lives at risk when they set up the Council for the Assistance of the Jews. The group was led by two women, Zofia Kossak and Wanda Filipowicz.

Since the German invasion of Poland in 1939, the Jewish population had been either thrust into ghettos, transported to concentration and labor camps, or murdered. Jewish homes and shops were confiscated and synagogues were burned to the ground. Word about the Jews' fate finally leaked out in June of 1942, when a Warsaw underground newspaper, the Liberty Brigade, made public the news that tens of thousands of Jews were being gassed at Chelmno, a death camp in Poland—almost seven months after the extermination of prisoners began.

Despite the growing public knowledge of the “Final Solution,” the mass extermination of European Jewry and the growing network of extermination camps in Poland, little was done to stop it. Outside Poland, there were only angry speeches from politicians and promises of postwar reprisals. Within Poland, non-Jewish Poles were themselves often the objects of persecution and forced labor at the hands of their Nazi occupiers; being Slavs, they too were considered “inferior” to the Aryan Germans.

But this did not stop Zofia Kossak and Wanda Filipowicz, two Polish Christians who were determined to do what they could to protect their Jewish neighbors. The fates of Kossak and Filipowicz are unclear so it is uncertain whether their mission was successful, but the very fact that they established the Council is evidence that some brave souls were willing to risk everything to help persecuted Jews. Kossak and Filipowicz were not alone in their struggle to help; in fact, only two days after the Council

was established, the SS, Hitler's "political" terror police force, rounded up 23 men, women, and children, and locked some in a cottage and some in a barn—then burned them alive. Their crime: suspicion of harboring Jews.

Despite the bravery of some Polish Christians, and Jewish resistance fighters within the Warsaw ghetto, who rebelled in 1943 (some of whom found refuge among their Christian neighbors as they attempted to elude the SS), the Nazi death machine proved overwhelming. Poland became the killing ground for not only Poland's Jewish citizens, but much of Europe's: Approximately 4.5 million Jews were killed in Poland's death and labor camps by war's end.

- **Dec 04 1966 – Vietnam War:** *Viet Cong attack Tan Son Nhut airport* » A Viet Cong unit penetrates the 13-mile defense perimeter around Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport and shells the field for over four hours. South Vietnamese and U.S. security guards finally drove off the attackers, killing 18 of them in the process. One U.S. RF-101 reconnaissance jet was badly damaged in the attack. The guerrillas returned that same night and resumed the attack, but security guards again repelled them, killing 11 more Viet Cong during the second battle.



- **Dec 04 1967 – Vietnam War:** *Riverine force surrounds Viet Cong battalion* » Elements of the U.S. mobile riverine force and 400 South Vietnamese in armored personnel carriers engage communist forces in the Mekong Delta. During the battle, 235 of the 300-member Viet Cong battalion were killed.

The mobile riverine force was an Army-Navy task force made up of the U.S. 9th Infantry Division (primarily the 2nd Brigade and associated support troops) and the U.S. Navy's Task Force 117. This force was often combined with units from the South Vietnamese 7th and 21st Infantry Divisions and the South Vietnamese Marine Corps. The mobile riverine concept called for Army troops to operate with Navy gunboats and troop carrier boats in the Mekong Delta. This gave the force the capability to travel 150 miles in 24 hours and launch combat operations with its 5,000-man force within 30 minutes after anchoring. The mobile riverine force was activated in June 1967. It conducted operations throughout the Delta until the responsibility for this mission was transferred to the South Vietnamese forces in April 1971, as part of the "Vietnamization" program.

- **Dec 04 1991 –Lebanon Hostage Crisis:** *Hostage Terry Anderson freed in Lebanon* » Islamic militants in Lebanon release kidnapped American journalist Terry Anderson after 2,454 days in captivity. As chief Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press, Anderson covered the long-running civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990). On March 16, 1985, he was kidnapped on a west Beirut street while leaving a tennis court. His captors took him to the southern suburbs of the city, where he was held prisoner in an underground dungeon for the next six-and-a-half years.



Anderson was one of 92 foreigners (including 17 Americans) abducted during Lebanon's bitter civil war. The kidnappings were linked to Hezbollah, or the Party of God, a militant Shiite Muslim organization formed in 1982 in reaction to Israel's military presence in Lebanon. They seized several Americans, including Anderson, soon after Kuwaiti courts jailed 17 Shiites found guilty of bombing the American and French embassies there in 1983. Hezbollah in Lebanon received financial and spiritual support from Iran, where prominent leaders praised the bombers and kidnappers for performing their duty to Islam.

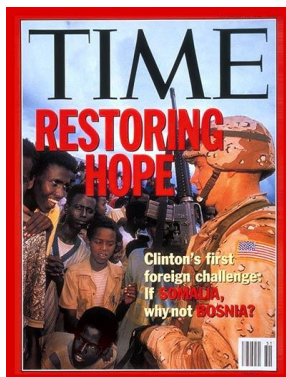
U.S. relations with Iran—and with Syria, the other major foreign influence in Lebanon—showed signs of improving by 1990, when the civil war drew to a close, aided by Syria's intervention on behalf of the Lebanese army. Eager to win favor from the U.S. in order to promote its own economic goals, Iran used its influence in Lebanon to engineer the release of nearly all the hostages over the course of 1991.

Anderson returned to the U.S. and was reunited with his family, including his daughter Suleme, born three months after his capture. In 1999, he sued the Iranian government for \$100 million, accusing it of sponsoring his kidnapers; he received a multi-million dollar settlement.

- **Dec 04 1992 – Somalia:** *Bush orders U.S. troops to Somalia* » President George H. Bush orders 28,000 U.S. troops to Somalia, a war-torn East African nation where rival warlords were preventing the distribution of humanitarian aid to thousands of starving Somalis. In a military mission he described as “God’s work,” Bush said that America must act to save more than a million Somali lives, but reassured Americans that “this operation is not open-ended” and that “we will not stay one day longer than is absolutely necessary.” Unfortunately, America’s humanitarian troops became embroiled in Somalia’s political conflict, and the controversial mission stretched on for 15 months before being abruptly called off by President Bill Clinton in 1993.

In 1992, clan-based civil-war fighting and one of the worst African droughts of the century created famine conditions that threatened one-fourth of Somalia’s population with starvation. In August 1992, the United Nations began a peacekeeping mission to the country to ensure the distribution of food and medical aid, but it was largely unsuccessful. With U.N. troops unable to control Somalia’s warring factions, security deteriorating, and thousands of tons of food stranded in portside warehouses, President Bush ordered a large U.S. military force to the area on December 4, 1992. Five days later, the first U.S. Marines landed in the first phase of “Operation Restore Hope.”

With the aid of U.S. military troops and forces from other nations, the U.N. succeeded in distributing desperately needed food to many starving Somalis. However, with factional fighting continuing unabated, and the U.N. without an effective agenda to resolve the political strife, there seemed no clear end in sight to Operation Restore Hope when President Bill Clinton took office in January 1993.



Like his predecessor, Clinton was anxious to bring the Americans home, and in May the mission was formally handed back to the United Nations. By June 1993, only 4,200 U.S. troops remained. However, on June 5, 24 Pakistani U.N. peacekeepers inspecting a weapons storage site were ambushed and massacred by Somalia soldiers under the warlord General Mohammed Aidid. U.S. and U.N. forces subsequently began an extensive search for the elusive strongman, and in August, 400 elite U.S. troops from Delta Force and the U.S. Rangers arrived on a mission to capture Aidid. Two months later, on October 3-4, 18 of these soldiers were killed and 84 wounded during a disastrous assault on Mogadishu's Olympia Hotel in search of Aidid. The bloody battle, which lasted 17 hours, was the most violent U.S. combat firefight since Vietnam. As many as 1,000 Somalis were killed.

Three days later, with Aidid still at large, President Clinton cut his losses and ordered a total U.S. withdrawal. On March 25, 1994, the last U.S. troops left Somalia, leaving 20,000 U.N. troops behind to facilitate "nation-building" in the divided country. The U.N. troops departed in 1995 and political strife and clan-based fighting continued in Somalia into the 21st century.

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- **Dec 05 1775 – American Revolution:** At Fort Ticonderoga, Henry Knox begins his historic 300 mile 50 day transport of 59 pieces of artillery weighing 60 tons to Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- **Dec 05 1862 – Civil War:** Union General Ulysses S. Grant's cavalry receives a setback in an engagement on the Mississippi Central Railroad at Coffeeville, Mississippi.
- **Dec 05 1864 – Civil War:** Confederate General John Bell Hood sends Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry and a division of infantry toward Murfreesboro, TN.
- **Dec 05 1864 – Russo*Japanese War:** The Japanese destroy a Russian fleet at Port Arthur in Korea.
- **Dec 05 1915 – WWI:** *Siege of British-occupied Kut, Mesopotamia begins* » Turkish and German forces launch an attack on the British-occupied town of Kut al-Amara on the Tigris River in Mesopotamia, modern-day Iraq.

Under the command of Sir John Nixon, British troops had enjoyed early success in their invasion of Mesopotamia. Forces led by Nixon's forward divisional commander, Sir Charles Townshend, reached and occupied the Mesopotamian province of Basra, including the town of Kut al-Amara, by late

September 1915. From there, they attempted to move up the Tigris and Euphrates rivers towards Baghdad, but were rebuffed by Turkish troops at Ctesiphon (or Selman Pak) in late November. Despite outnumbering the Turks two-to-one, Townshend's troops, made up partially of soldiers dispatched from India, were forced to retreat to Kut, where on December 5 Turkish and German troops began a siege that would last for the next five months.

Nixon had envisioned Kut as a base for his troops to invade further into the region and eventually provide a pivot point for an ambitious strategy where the Russians would enter the region through Azerbaijan and Persia and join the Allied forces to envelop the enemy. Unfortunately for the British troops, problems with illness among the British officers and sinking morale due to wet weather and dwindling supplies plagued Townshend's forces, who tried four times without success to confront and surround their Turkish opponents only to suffer heavy casualties.

Kut fell on April 29, 1916, and Townshend was forced to give up the fight, along with his remaining 10,000 men. That day marked the largest single surrender of troops in British history up until that time.

- **Dec 05 1941 – WW2:** *American carrier Lexington heads to Midway* » The Lexington, one of the two largest aircraft carriers employed by the United States during World War II, makes its way across the Pacific in order to carry a squadron of dive bombers to defend Midway Island from an anticipated Japanese attack.



Negotiations between the United States and Japan had been ongoing for months. Japan wanted an end to U.S. economic sanctions. The Americans wanted Japan out of China and Southeast Asia and Japan to repudiate the Tripartite “Axis” Pact with Germany and Italy before those sanctions could be lifted. Neither side was budging. President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull were anticipating a Japanese strike as retaliation—they just didn’t know where. The Philippines, Wake Island, Midway Island—all were possibilities. American intelligence reports had sighted the Japanese fleet movement out from Formosa (Taiwan), apparently headed for Indochina.

The U.S. State Department demanded from Japanese envoys explanations for the fleet movement across the South China Sea. The envoys claimed ignorance. Army intelligence reassured the president that, despite fears, Japan was most likely headed for Thailand—not the United States.

The Lexington never made it to Midway Island; when it learned that the Japanese fleet had, in fact, attacked Pearl Harbor, it turned back—never encountering a Japanese warship en route or employing a single aircraft in its defense. By the time it reached Hawaii, it was December 13.

- **DEC 05 1941 – WW2:** *Germany's drive to take Moscow halted* » After the German armies paused for breath in early November, the weather turned colder, freezing the mud and giving Hitler's troops

the solid footing they needed to advance. By the end of November, German reconnaissance units were just 12 miles from Moscow, so close they could see the towers of the city through their binoculars. So close and yet so far. By the beginning of December, the thermometer had dropped to 45 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. It's not true that the Germans were unaware of the Russian winter. But with limited supply capacity, priority was given to fuel and ammunition. Besides, who needs winter clothing if Moscow was supposed to be captured before General Winter struck?

Instead, it was the Soviets who struck. Stalin had been reassured by information from Richard Sorge, a German living in Japan but working for Soviet intelligence, that the Japanese would turn south to fight the Americans and British instead of north against Siberia. He felt able to transfer 18 elite Siberian divisions, well-trained and well-equipped for operating in harsh winter conditions, by rail to Moscow. Report Advertisement. When the counter offensive began on 5 DEC, the Soviet armies punched through an enemy more scarecrow than human. German weapons were frozen, German soldiers were frozen, and sometimes the soldiers froze to the weapons. The survivors could only watch helplessly as the attackers, warmly clad in fur-lined jackets and boots, and camouflaged in white snowsuits, emerged like ghosts through the mist and snow.

Now came one of those decision points that occur in every major battle. Some of Hitler's generals wanted to retreat to a line far from Moscow. But Hitler feared that a retreat would disintegrate into a panic-stricken rout that would bring the Red Army to the gates of Germany. He ordered his troops to hold their positions to the last man, a hedgehog defense of strong points that would be defended even when surrounded. Though Hitler fired some generals who disagreed, many German commanders later praised the decision as preventing a collapse like that suffered by Napoleon's Grande Armee in 1812. The Germans were pushed back to Rzhev, 150 miles from Moscow. But their lines were still intact, and though battered, their armies were still ready to fight. And now it was Stalin's turn for overconfidence. The Soviets had also suffered grievously during the counteroffensive: their troops were inexperienced, their supply lines were strained by snow and mud, and they also suffered from the cold. Nonetheless, with dreams of reaching Berlin in his eyes, Stalin ordered his exhausted forces to continue attacking. The result was heavy losses in futile attacks. By February, the Germans even counterattacked, destroying several Soviet divisions.

What had been accomplished? Both sides had gambled and failed. German dreams of capturing Moscow and ending the War in the East had evaporated. Stalin's dreams of a grand counteroffensive that would kick the Germans out of the Soviet Union also faltered. The slaughterhouse that was the Eastern Front would continue into 1942, and then into 1945.

- **Dec 05 1943 – WW2:** U.S. Army Air Force begins attacking Germany's secret weapons bases in Operation Crossbow
- **Dec 05 1944 – WW2:** Allied troops occupy Ravenna.
- **Dec 05 1944 – WW2:** *Operation Caesar* » This was a secret mission carried out by Germany in World War II to supply Germany's faltering ally, Japan, with advanced technology to fuel their war machine. The operation was a complete failure. The engagement that ended the mission is the only known instance in history of one submerged submarine sinking another submerged submarine

U-864, on her maiden voyage, was dispatched on a secret mission to deliver supplies to Japan. U-864's primary cargo was advanced Messerschmitt jet engine parts for use in Japanese aircraft and V-2 missile guidance systems. Her secondary cargo comprised 65 tonnes of the strategic material mercury in 1,857 canisters for use in weapons production. She left Kiel and headed north. While going through the Kiel Canal, U-864 grounded and damaged her hull. Her captain, Ralf-Reimar Wolfram, decided to sail to the U-boat pens at Bergen, Norway.

On 12 January 1945, while U-864 was still undergoing repairs, British bombers attacked the pens, delaying the repairs further. The repairs were completed in early February and Wolfram embarked on his mission once again. British code breakers at Bletchley Park deciphered Enigma encoded transmissions and were alerted to U-864's mission. To counter the German U-boat, the Admiralty diverted the submarine HMS Venturer, which had just left Lerwick in Scotland, to the coasts of Fedje, Norway to search for U-864.

On 6 FEB U-864 began experiencing trouble with one of her engines, which began misfiring, greatly increasing the sounds the U-boat made. Wolfram contacted Bergen, informing them that he would be returning for further repairs. Wolfram was told that an escort would be waiting for them at Hellisøy on the 10th. At the same time, Venturer, commanded by Lieutenant James Launders arrived in Fedje and began searching for the U-boat. On 9 FEB, Venturer's hydrophone operator detected a noise that sounded like a diesel engine. Launders raised periscope and surveyed the horizon, he spotted what he believed to be another periscope (in fact now thought to be the U-boat's snorkel) and began stalking it, assuming that it was U-864.[1]

As Venturer followed the German U-boat, it became apparent that they had been spotted due to the erratic, zigzag course U-864 began to take. After following the German submarine for three more hours, Venturer's crew made a calculated decision based on U-864's movements. At intervals of 17.4 seconds, Venturer fired all four of her torpedoes. Hearing the incoming torpedoes, U-864 took evasive maneuvers, successfully avoiding the first three torpedoes, but unknowingly steered into the path of the fourth. The torpedo struck the U-boat, splitting her in half and sending her to the ocean floor. All 73 of her crew perished

After coming across documents listing mercury as one of the cargoes on board U-864, the Royal Norwegian Navy began searching for the wreckage. After searching for five years, the U-boat was located in October 2003 by the mine control vessel HNoMS Tyr, 4 kilometers off Fedje. After examining the site for two years, it became apparent that the mercury was indeed leaking into the ocean at increasing rates every year. Due to the hazards of mercury, fishing is now prohibited in the region. One study recommended entombing the wreck under a layer of sand as well as gravel and concrete. The Norwegian government instead awarded a contract to a salvage company to raise the wreck; however, the proposed operation was put on hold pending additional studies.

The Norwegian government spent 15 years assessing possible risks of raising the wreck, with its dangerous unexploded torpedoes inside. Finally, in February 2017, it was decided to cover the U-864 with 50 centimeters of sand and 160,000 tonnes of rocks to seal the mercury inside the wreck and prevent further contamination. At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwqDrj3i8eg> can be viewed a 44 minute film titled 'Hitler's Last Deadly Secret - U 864' on this event.

- **Dec 05 1945 – WW2: *Aircraft squadron lost in the Bermuda Triangle*** » At 2:10 p.m., five U.S. Navy Avenger torpedo-bombers comprising Flight 19 take off from the Ft. Lauderdale Naval Air Station in Florida on a routine three-hour training mission. Flight 19 was scheduled to take them due east for 120 miles, north for 73 miles, and then back over a final 120-mile leg that would return them to the naval base. They never returned.

Two hours after the flight began, the leader of the squadron, who had been flying in the area for more than six months, reported that his compass and back-up compass had failed and that his position was unknown. The other planes experienced similar instrument malfunctions. Radio facilities on land were contacted to find the location of the lost squadron, but none were successful. After two more hours of confused messages from the fliers, a distorted radio transmission from the squadron leader was heard at 6:20 p.m., apparently calling for his men to prepare to ditch their aircraft simultaneously because of lack of fuel.

By this time, several land radar stations finally determined that Flight 19 was somewhere north of the Bahamas and east of the Florida coast, and at 7:27 p.m. a search and rescue Mariner aircraft took off with a 13-man crew. Three minutes later, the Mariner aircraft radioed to its home base that its mission was underway. The Mariner was never heard from again. Later, there was a report from a tanker cruising off the coast of Florida of a visible explosion seen at 7:50 p.m.



The disappearance of the 14 men of Flight 19 and the 13 men of the Mariner led to one of the largest air and seas searches to that date, and hundreds of ships and aircraft combed thousands of square miles of the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, and remote locations within the interior of Florida. No trace of the bodies or aircraft was ever found.

Although naval officials maintained that the remains of the six aircraft and 27 men were not found because stormy weather destroyed the evidence, the story of the “Lost Squadron” helped cement the legend of the Bermuda Triangle, an area of the Atlantic Ocean where ships and aircraft are said to disappear without a trace. The Bermuda Triangle is said to stretch from the southern U.S. coast across to Bermuda and down to the Atlantic coast of Cuba and Santo Domingo.

- **Dec 05 1950 – Korean War:** Pyongyang in Korea falls to the invading Chinese army.
- **Dec 05 1964 – Vietnam War:** Army Captain awarded first Medal of Honor for action in Vietnam » The MOH is presented to Capt. Roger Donlon of Saugerties, New York, for his heroic action earlier in the year.



Donlon (standing at right, at attention) waits to receive his Medal of Honor from U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Captain Donlon and his Special Forces team were manning Camp Nam Dong, a mountain outpost near the borders of Laos and North Vietnam. Just before two o'clock in the morning on July 6, 1964, hordes of Viet Cong attacked the camp. He was shot in the stomach, but Donlon stuffed a handkerchief into the wound, cinched up his belt, and kept fighting. He was wounded three more times, but he continued fighting—manning a mortar, throwing grenades at the enemy, and refusing medical attention.

The battle ended in early morning; 154 Viet Cong were killed during the battle. Two Americans died and seven were wounded. Over 50 South Vietnamese soldiers and Nung mercenaries were also killed during the action. Once the battle was over, Donlon allowed himself to be evacuated to a hospital in Saigon. He spent over a month there before rejoining the surviving members of his Special Forces team; they completed their six-month tour in Vietnam in November and flew home together. In a White House ceremony, with Donlon's nine surviving team members watching, President Lyndon B. Johnson presented him with the Medal of Honor for "conspicuous gallantry, extraordinary heroism and intrepidity at the risk of his own life above and beyond the call of duty." Donlon, justifiably proud of his team, told the president, "The medal belongs to them, too."

- **Dec 05 1970– Vietnam War:** *North Vietnam announces it will not be intimidated by U.S. bombing* » A North Vietnamese newspaper declares that the country will not be intimidated by U.S. bombing threats. Earlier in the week, U.S. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird had warned that the U.S. would initiate new bombing raids on North Vietnam if the communists continued to fire on unarmed reconnaissance aircraft flying over their air space. Responding to Laird's threats, North Vietnamese officials declared that any U.S. reconnaissance planes that flew over North Vietnam would be fired upon. This declaration implied that North Vietnam would not be forced into concessions, and was prepared to continue the war regardless of the cost.
- **Dec 05 1978– Afghanistan:** *USSR and Afghanistan sign "friendship treaty"* » In an effort to prop up an unpopular pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union signs a "friendship treaty" with the Afghan government agreeing to provide economic and military assistance. The treaty moved the Russians another step closer to their disastrous involvement in the Afghan civil war between the Soviet-supported communist government and the Muslim rebels, the Mujahideen, which officially began in 1979.

The Soviet Union always considered the bordering nation of Afghanistan of interest to its national security. Since the 1950s, the Soviet Union worked diligently to establish close relations with its

neighbor by providing economic aid and military assistance. In the 1970s matters took a dramatic turn in Afghanistan, and in April 1978, members of the Afghan Communist Party overthrew and murdered President Sardar Mohammed Daoud. Nur Mohammed Taraki, head of the Communist Party, took over and immediately declared one-party rule in Afghanistan. The regime was extremely unpopular with many Afghans so the Soviets sought to bolster it with the December 1978 treaty. The treaty established a 20-year period of “friendship and cooperation” between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. In addition to increased economic assistance, the Soviet Union promised continued cooperation in the military field. Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev declared that the treaty marked a “qualitatively new character” of relations between the two nations.

The treaty, however, did not help Afghanistan. Taraki was overthrown and killed by members of the Afghan Communist Party who were dissatisfied with his rule in September 1979. In December, Soviet troops moved into Afghanistan and established a regime more amenable to Russian desires. Thus began what many pundits referred to as “Russia’s Vietnam,” as the Soviets poured endless amounts of money, weapons, and manpower into a seemingly endless civil war. Mikhail Gorbachev finally began the withdrawal of Russian troops nearly 10 years later.

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- **Dec 06 1777 – American Revolution:** *Whitemarsh skirmishes turn in Americans' favor* » General George Washington’s battered forces manage to outsmart British General William Howe’s year-end attempt to drive the Americans from the hills in what is now Whitemarsh Township, Pennsylvania, north of Philadelphia. According to legend, a Quaker housewife named Lydia Darragh gave Washington’s men warning that the British planned to attack. Although the Pennsylvania militiamen sent to meet Howe’s troops on 5 DEC quickly fled, their retreat back to the hills proved a strategic boon. From the hills they could see Howe’s every move, and Howe overestimated the Patriots’ strength. Washington successfully deceived his opponent by having his men set extra campfires.

By 6 DEC, Howe realized that he would be unable to use his preferred flanking strategy against the Americans, as they could see his every move from their lofty vantage point. On 7 DEC, Howe chose to engage on Edge Hill on the left side of the American position. American General Daniel Morgan led his riflemen against the British in the style of guerilla warfare for which they would later become famous in the Carolinas, though he was eventually forced to retreat in the face of an attack by General Charles Cornwallis’ regiment.

Although Howe decided against attacking the main American line, General Charles “No Flint” Grey grew tired of waiting for Howe’s go-ahead and launched a separate attack on Edge Hill. The Patriots narrowly avoided disaster at Grey’s hands. A cavalry squad arrived just in time to save Continental officers Colonel Joseph Reed and General John Cadwalader from death at the ends of Hessian bayonets. Having successfully softened Washington’s position, Grey decided against further combat. After two days of inconclusive skirmishes, Howe decided to return to the city on 8 DEC. He made no further attempts to attack Washington’s troops that winter, a decision for which he was eventually relieved of his duties.

- **Dec 06 1861 – Civil War:** Union General George G. Meade leads a foraging expedition to Gunnell’s farm near Dranesville, Virginia.

- **Dec 06 1862 – Old West:** President Abraham Lincoln orders the hanging of 39 of the 303 convicted Indians who participated in the Sioux Uprising in Minnesota. They are to be hanged on December 26.
- **Dec 06 1863 – Civil War:** The monitor Weehawken goes down at anchor in the Charleston Harbor in a gale and took with her four of her engineers and twenty-six of her crew.



- **Dec 06 1865 – Civil War:** 13th Amendment ratified » Officially ending the institution of slavery, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, is ratified. With these words, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”, the single greatest change wrought by the Civil War was officially noted in the Constitution.

The ratification came eight months after the end of the war, but it represented the culmination of the struggle against slavery. When the war began, some in the North were against fighting what they saw as a crusade to end slavery. Although many northern Democrats and conservative Republicans were opposed to slavery’s expansion, they were ambivalent about outlawing the institution entirely. The war’s escalation after the First Battle of Bull Run, Virginia, in July 1861 caused many to rethink the role that slavery played in creating the conflict. By 1862, Lincoln realized that it was folly to wage such a bloody war without plans to eliminate slavery. In September 1862, following the Union victory at the Battle of Antietam in Maryland, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that all slaves in territory still in rebellion on January 1, 1863, would be declared forever free. The move was largely symbolic, as it only freed slaves in areas outside of Union control, but it changed the conflict from a war for the reunification of the states to a war whose objectives included the destruction of slavery.

Lincoln believed that a constitutional amendment was necessary to ensure the end of slavery. In 1864, Congress debated several proposals. Some insisted on including provisions to prevent discrimination against blacks, but the Senate Judiciary Committee provided the eventual language. It borrowed from the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, when slavery was banned from the area north of the Ohio River. The Senate passed the amendment in April 1864.

A Republican victory in the 1864 presidential election would guarantee the success of the amendment. The Republican platform called for the “utter and complete destruction” of slavery, while the Democrats favored restoration of states’ rights, which would include at least the possibility for the states to maintain slavery. Lincoln’s overwhelming victory set in motion the events leading to ratification of the amendment. The House passed the measure in January 1865 and it was sent to the states for ratification. When Georgia ratified it on December 6, 1865, the institution of slavery officially ceased to exist in the United States.

- **Dec 06 1917 – WWI:** USS Jacob Jones is the first American destroyer to be sunk by enemy action when it is torpedoed by German submarine SM U-53. She sank in 8 minutes with the loss of 66 officers and men and without issuing a distress call. The German sub commander after taking two badly injured Jacob Jones crewmen aboard his submarine, radioed the American base at Queenstown with the coordinates for the survivors.



- **Dec 06 1917 – WWI:** *Ships explode in Canadian harbor* » A Belgian steamer and French freighter, both loaded with ammunition, explode in Canada’s Halifax Harbor, leveling part of the town and killing nearly 1,600 people and injuring approximately 8,000. The 8 million tons of TNT carried by the ships was intended for use in World War I.

The ships were gathered in Halifax, the meeting point for convoys to begin the dangerous Atlantic crossing, during which they were threatened by the deadly and stealthy German U-boat submarines. The HMS High Flyer was assigned to lead the convoy. The freighter from France, the Mont Blanc, had picked up a full load of TNT in New York and came into the harbor on a foggy morning. Due to the poor conditions, it collided with the Imo, a Belgian steam boat, also carrying ammunition. A fire resulted and both ships were abandoned immediately.

A British ship, the Pictou, was at a pier in the harbor and was also filled with ammunition. The crew of the Pictou immediately fled and set the ship free upon witnessing the collision. The High Flyer was the only ship that took any action to try to stop the disaster—it sent 23 men toward the collision to attempt to sink the vessels. They were too late: A massive explosion occurred just as they reached the ships.



The explosion sent burning debris throughout Halifax. It also caused a large wave to form that pushed the ships at pier right up out of the harbor. A Canadian army officer stationed at Halifax described the result, “All that could be seen for a great circumference were burning buildings, great mounds of iron and brick in the streets and dead bodies.” A 2.5- mile radius was completely demolished and the explosion could be felt 125 miles away. The wave of water hit a Navy ammunition plant located near the shores, possibly saving it from the fire.

Most other places nearby were not so lucky: The railway station collapsed from the blast and crushed scores of people inside. About 100 more were killed in a sugar plant located near the water. Of the 500

students located in schools nearby, less than 10 survived. In all, the death toll was somewhere between 1,200 and 4,000, but no one knows for sure because so much of the city was completely obliterated. Many more might have died except for a snowstorm later that day that helped put out the flames. Still, 25,000 people were left homeless in the wake of the disaster.

- **Dec 06 1941 – Pre WW2:** American Ambassador Davis says Japan is a grave security threat in the Pacific.
- **Dec 06 1938 – Pre WW2:** France and Germany sign a treaty of friendship.
- **Dec 06 1939 – Pre WW2:** Britain agrees to send arms to Finland, which is fighting off a Soviet invasion.
- **Dec 06 1941 – Pre WW2:** *Roosevelt to Japanese emperor: "Prevent further death and destruction"*
» President Roosevelt—convinced on the basis of intelligence reports that the Japanese fleet is headed for Thailand, not the United States—telegrams Emperor Hirohito with the request that “for the sake of humanity,” the emperor intervene “to prevent further death and destruction in the world.”

The Royal Australian Air Force had sighted Japanese escorts, cruisers, and destroyers on patrol near the Malayan coast, south of Cape Cambodia. An Aussie pilot managed to radio that it looked as if the Japanese warships were headed for Thailand—just before he was shot down by the Japanese. Back in England, Prime Minister Churchill called a meeting of his chiefs of staff to discuss the crisis. While reports were coming in describing Thailand as the Japanese destination, they began to question whether it could have been a diversion. British intelligence had intercepted the Japanese code “Raffles,” a warning to the Japanese fleet to be on alert—but for what?

Britain was already preparing Operation Matador, the launching of their 11th Indian Division into Thailand to meet the presumed Japanese invasion force. But at the last minute, Air Marshall Brooke-Popham received word not to cross the Thai border for fear that it would provoke a Japanese attack if, in fact, the warship movement was merely a bluff.

Meanwhile, 600 miles northwest of Hawaii, Admiral Yamamoto, commander of the Japanese fleet, announced to his men: “The rise or fall of the empire depends upon this battle. Everyone will do his duty with utmost efforts.” Thailand was, in fact, a bluff. Pearl Harbor in Oahu, Hawaii was confirmed for Yamamoto as the Japanese target, after the Japanese consul in Hawaii had reported to Tokyo that a significant portion of the U.S. Pacific fleet would be anchored in the harbor—sitting ducks. The following morning, Sunday, December 7, was a good day to begin a raid.

“The son of man has just sent his final message to the son of God,” FDR joked to Eleanor after sending off his telegram to Hirohito, who in the Shinto tradition of Japan was deemed a god. As he enjoyed his stamp collection and chatted with Harry Hopkins, his personal adviser, news reached him of Japan’s formal rejection of America’s 10-point proposals for peace and an end to economic sanctions and the oil embargo placed on the Axis power. “This means war,” the president declared. Hopkins recommended an American first strike. “No, we can’t do that,” Roosevelt countered. “We are a democracy and a peaceful people.”

- **Dec 06 1948 – Cold War:** The “Pumpkin Spy Papers” are found on the Maryland farm of Whittaker Chambers. They become evidence that State Department employee Alger Hiss is spying for the Soviet Union.
- **Dec 06 1961 – Vietnam War:** Operation Farm Gate combat missions authorized » U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff authorize combat missions by Operation Farm Gate pilots. With this order, U.S. Air Force pilots were given the go-ahead to undertake combat missions against the Viet Cong as long as at least one Vietnamese national was carried on board the strike aircraft for training purposes. The program had initially been designed to provide advisory support to assist the South Vietnamese Air Force in increasing its capability. The gradual but dramatic expansion of Operation Farm Gate reflected the increasing involvement of the United States in Vietnam.

President John F. Kennedy originally ordered the Air Force to send a combat detachment to South Vietnam to assist the Saigon government in developing its own counterinsurgency capability. The Air Force formed the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron, which arrived at Bien Hoa Airfield in November 1961. Under Operation Farm Gate, the 4400th used older, propeller-driven aircraft to train South Vietnamese Air Force personnel. With the new order from the Joint Chiefs, the 4400th mission was expanded to include limited combat missions in support of South Vietnamese ground forces.

Farm Gate pilots began flying reconnaissance missions and providing logistical support to U.S. Army Special Forces units. The rules of engagement for combat missions dictated that American pilots only fly missions that the South Vietnamese were unable to undertake. The first Operation Farm Gate mission was flown on December 16, 1961. However, by late 1962, the communist activity and combat intensity had increased so much that President John F. Kennedy ordered a further expansion of Farm Gate. In early 1963, additional aircraft arrived and new detachments were established at Pleiku and Soc Trang.



A Farm Gate B-26B over Vietnam.

In early 1964, Farm Gate was upgraded again with the arrival of more modern aircraft. By March 1965, Washington had altogether dropped the requirement that a South Vietnamese national be carried on combat missions. In October 1965, another squadron of A-1E aircraft was established at Bien Hoa. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara approved the replacement of South Vietnamese markings on Farm Gate aircraft with regular U.S. Air Force markings. By this point in the war, the Farm Gate squadrons were flying 80 percent of all missions in support of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam

(ARVN). With the buildup of U.S. combat forces in South Vietnam and the increase in U.S. Air Force presence there, the role of the Farm Gate program gradually decreased in significance. The Farm Gate squadrons were moved to Thailand in 1967, where they launched missions against the North Vietnamese forces in Laos.

- **Dec 06 1966 – Vietnam War:** U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff authorize combat missions by Operation Farm Gate pilots. With this order, U.S. Air Force pilots were given the go-ahead to undertake combat missions against the Viet Cong as long as at least one Vietnamese national was carried on board the strike aircraft for training purposes.
- **Dec 06 1972 – Vietnam War:** *Fighting continues in South Vietnam while negotiators talk in Paris* » Fighting in South Vietnam intensifies as the secret Paris peace talks resume after a 24-hour break. The renewed combat was a result of both sides trying to achieve a positional advantage in the countryside in preparation for the possibility that a cease-fire might be worked out in Paris.

Tan Son Nhut, one of two major airports near Saigon, is hit by the heaviest communist rocket attack in four years. One U.S. rescue helicopter was destroyed and a fuel dump was set ablaze. In response, U.S. planes bombed suspected Viet Cong positions within 10 miles of the airport. These strikes were followed by South Vietnamese troop attacks against the area from which the rockets were fired. Elsewhere in South Vietnam, fighting continued around Quang Tri, south of the Demilitarized Zone. Quang Tri fell to the North Vietnamese during their spring offensive earlier in the year. South Vietnamese forces reclaimed the city from the communists in September, but fighting continued in the areas around the city.

- **Dec 06 1987 – Cold War:** *Protests against Soviet treatment of Jews take place in Washington and Moscow* » On the eve of Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev's arrival in the United States for a summit meeting with President Ronald Reagan, more than 200,000 protesters in Washington, and a much smaller number in Moscow, protest Soviet policies concerning Russian Jews. The protests succeeded in focusing public attention on human rights abuses in Russia but had little impact on the summit.

The agenda for the Gorbachev-Reagan summit largely focused on weapons control issues, particularly the elimination of intermediate-range nuclear missiles from Europe. The Soviet presence in Afghanistan and support of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua were also topics for discussion. Over 200,000 protesters in Washington attempted to shift the focus to another issue—the Soviet government's treatment of Russian Jews. In particular, they called on the Soviets to allow Jewish emigration from Russia and for an end to Soviet oppression of Jewish dissidents and critics of the Soviet government. In a letter that was read to appease the protesters, President Reagan stated that he would “not be satisfied with less” than the “release of all refuseniks [jailed dissidents] and for complete freedom of religious and cultural expression.” A demonstration set to coincide with the protests in Washington was roughly disrupted by Soviet plainclothes police in Moscow. The few dozen protesters had their signs and banners seized and destroyed and some were physically assaulted.



Despite the protests and Reagan's rhetoric, the issue of Soviet human rights abuses played almost no role at the summit. The Soviets insisted that the protesters be ignored and U.S. officials, anxious to get an arms control agreement out of the summit, essentially complied with the Russian requests. A major arms agreement was, in fact, signed during the meeting.

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- **Dec 07 1776 – American Revolution:** Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette arranges to enter the American military as a major general.



- **Dec 07 1777 – American Revolution:** General George Washington's battered forces manage to outsmart British General William Howe's year-end attempt to drive the Americans from the hills in what is now Whitmarsh Township, Pennsylvania, north of Philadelphia.
- **Dec 07 1861 – Civil War:** USS Santiago de Cuba, under Commander Daniel B. Ridgely, halts the British schooner Eugenia Smith and captures J.W. Zacharie, a New Orleans merchant and Confederate purchasing agent.
- **Dec 07 1862 – Civil War:** *Battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas* » Northwestern Arkansas and southwestern Missouri are secured for the Union when a force commanded by General James G. Blunt holds off a force of Confederates under General Thomas Hindman at the Battle of Prairie Grove, Arkansas.

Hindman assembled a force at Fort Smith, Arkansas, to make an attempt to recapture territory lost during the Pea Ridge campaign of early 1862. He planned to cross the Boston Mountains into northwestern Arkansas and then Missouri, but the Union Army of the Frontier, commanded by John Schofield, made a preemptive move to Maysville, Arkansas. Schofield had to leave the army due to

illness, and Blunt assumed command. When Hindman sent an advance detachment of cavalry under John Marmaduke through the mountains in late November, Blunt moved south and defeated Marmaduke in a minor engagement at Cane Hill.

After Cane Hill, Hindman moved his 11,000-man army across the Boston Mountains and approached Blunt's 5,000 troops. Hindman prepared to attack, but was surprised by the approach of Union reinforcements from Missouri. In one of the most dramatic marches of the entire war, Union General Francis Herron had moved 7,000 reinforcements more than 110 miles in three and a half days. Hindman turned to face Herron, but then took up defensive positions in Prairie Grove. Herron arrived and attacked Hindman on December 7. Herron sent only half of his force to the assault, believing that this was only part of Hindman's force. Outnumbered nearly three to one, Herron's attack failed. Hindman ordered a counterattack, but it was repulsed with heavy losses. Hearing noise from the battle, Blunt moved toward Prairie Grove and attacked Hindman later that day. This, too, failed, as did another Confederate counterattack.

Darkness ended the engagement with the Confederates still holding the high ground at Prairie Grove. The battle was a tactical draw but Hindman's army was running low on ammunition. Confederate losses amounted to more than 1,400 killed and wounded, while the Yankees lost more than 1,200. Hindman retreated back to Fort Smith, and the region was secured for the Union.

- **Dec 07 1917 – WWI:** *U.S. Declares War on Austria–Hungary* » With only one dissenting vote in Congress the United States declares war on Austria–Hungary. It followed, by eight months, the earlier declaration of war against Germany that had brought the United States into World War I. Jeannette Rankin, who had earlier voted against the declaration of war against Germany, voted in favor of the declaration of war against Austria-Hungary, stating that "the vote we are now to cast is not a vote on a declaration of war. If it were, I should vote against it. This is a vote on a mere technicality in the prosecution of a war already declared."

The sole vote of opposition in the House came from Meyer London, a Socialist representative from New York. On the floor of the House, London declared that he hated "professions of loyalty" but believed "I am as deeply in love with the United States as any man who can trace his ancestry to the Mayflower." However, London said that his constituents opposed war and he preferred the United States should instead adopt an arms embargo against Europe, the same rationale he had earlier given for opposing the declaration of war against Germany. He was roundly denounced on the floor of the chamber.

In the Senate Robert M. La Follette did not vote on the resolution, having departed the chamber to return to his office and prepare an amendment to the declaration which would guarantee that the United States would not participate in the post-war dismemberment of Austria. While La Follette was out of the chamber, the vote was called. La Follette later said he would have voted against the resolution in the form it was passed.

Dec 07 1917 – Post WWI: *Spartacists call for a German revolution* » A group of German radical socialists formed in 1916 and which in 1919 became the German Communist Party inspired the German Revolution (a.k.a. November Revolution). This was a civil conflict in the German Empire that resulted

in the replacement of the German federal constitutional monarchy with a democratic parliamentary republic that later became known as the Weimar Republic.

The causes of the revolution were the extreme burdens suffered by the population during the four years of war, the strong impact of the defeat on the German Empire and the social tensions between the general population and the elite of aristocrats and bourgeoisie who held power and had just lost the war. The revolutionary period lasted from November 1918 until the adoption in August 1919 of the Weimar Constitution.

- **Dec 07 1941 – WW2: Pearl Harbor Bombed** » At 7:55 a.m. Hawaii time, a Japanese dive bomber bearing the red symbol of the Rising Sun of Japan on its wings appears out of the clouds above the island of Oahu. A swarm of 360 Japanese warplanes followed, descending on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in a ferocious assault. The surprise attack struck a critical blow against the U.S. Pacific fleet and drew the United States irrevocably into World War II.

With diplomatic negotiations with Japan breaking down, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his advisers knew that an imminent Japanese attack was probable, but nothing had been done to increase security at the important naval base at Pearl Harbor. It was Sunday morning, and many military personnel had been given passes to attend religious services off base. At 7:02 a.m., two radar operators spotted large groups of aircraft in flight toward the island from the north, but, with a flight of B-17s expected from the United States at the time, they were told to sound no alarm. Thus, the Japanese air assault came as a devastating surprise to the naval base.



Much of the Pacific fleet was rendered useless: Five of eight battleships, three destroyers, and seven other ships were sunk or severely damaged, and more than 200 aircraft were destroyed. A total of 2,400 Americans were killed and 1,200 were wounded, many while valiantly attempting to repulse the attack. Japan's losses were some 30 planes, five midget submarines, and fewer than 100 men. Fortunately for the United States, all three Pacific fleet carriers were out at sea on training maneuvers. These giant aircraft carriers would have their revenge against Japan six months later at the Battle of Midway, reversing the tide against the previously invincible Japanese navy in a spectacular victory.

The day after Pearl Harbor was bombed, President Roosevelt appeared before a joint session of Congress and declared, "Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan." After a brief and forceful speech, he asked Congress to approve a resolution recognizing the state of war between the United States and Japan. The Senate voted for war against Japan by 82 to 0, and the House of Representatives approved the resolution by a vote of 388 to 1. The sole dissenter was Representative Jeannette Rankin of Montana, a devout pacifist who had also cast a dissenting vote

against the U.S. entrance into World War I. Three days later, Germany and Italy declared war against the United States, and the U.S. government responded in kind.

The American contribution to the successful Allied war effort spanned four long years and cost more than 400,000 American lives.

- **Dec 07 1941 – WW2:** *FDR reacts to news of Pearl Harbor bombing* » At around 1:30 p.m., President Franklin Roosevelt is conferring with advisor Harry Hopkins in his study when Navy Secretary Frank Knox bursts in and announces that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor. The attack killed more than 2,400 naval and military personnel.

For weeks, a war with Japan had appeared likely since negotiations had deteriorated over the subject of Japan's military forays into China and elsewhere in the Pacific during World War II. FDR and his advisors knew that an attack on the U.S. fleet at the Philippines was possible, but few suspected the naval base at Pearl Harbor would be a target.

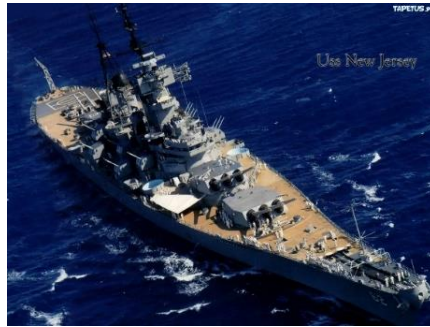
In her account of Roosevelt and first lady Eleanor during the years of the Second World War, *No Ordinary Time*, historian Doris Kearns Goodwin recounts the scene at the White House on that tragic and pivotal day: Eleanor had just finished hosting a luncheon and walked into FDR's study just as he received confirmation of the attack via telephone. While aides and secretaries scurried around the room, Eleanor overheard some of her husband's conversation and knew that, in her words, "the final blow had fallen and we had been attacked."

Although Eleanor, who knew Roosevelt best, later recalled her husband's demeanor on that day as "deadly calm," she knew that he was incensed by the attacks. He was concerned that it might only be a matter of time until Germany, too, would officially declare war on the United States and that, at that moment, U.S. forces would be hard-pressed to fight a war on two fronts. According to Goodwin, he told Eleanor that it would take time for the United States to build up its military and that he feared the nation would "have to take a good many defeats before we can have a victory." Indeed, FDR and his advisors had discussed the possibility that the Japanese were already planning an invasion of the mainland somewhere on the West Coast.

As the day wore on, Roosevelt displayed a calm and steady efficiency: He consulted with military advisors, enlisted his son James' help to work with the media and spoke by telephone with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who told him "we are all in the same boat now." Early that evening, Roosevelt dictated a speech to his secretary, Grace Tully, which he planned to deliver to Congress the next day. (Eleanor actually addressed the nation on the subject of war before her husband. That evening she delivered a scheduled weekly radio broadcast in which she told listeners that although the United States had been thrust reluctantly into the war she was confident that "whatever is asked of [America] we shall accomplish it; we are the free and unconquerable people of the U.S.A.") Late that night, Roosevelt updated his cabinet and Congressional members on the situation: "this is probably the most serious crisis any Cabinet has confronted since the Civil War." One cabinet member later noted that the president, a former Navy man, was visibly distraught while recounting what he had been told of the strafing of sailors and the destruction of most of the Pacific fleet. After the meeting, Roosevelt went to bed.

The next day, Roosevelt addressed Congress and the nation with a somber yet stirring speech in which he swore that America would never forget December 7, 1941, as a “date that would live in infamy.”

- **Dec 07 1942 – WW2:** The U.S. Navy launches USS New Jersey, the largest battleship ever built. It displaced 4500 tons, was 887ft long, had a beam of 87 ft, draft of 28.9 ft, speed of 33 knots, and complement of 1,921 officers and men.



- **Dec 07 1964 – Vietnam War:** Situation deteriorates in South Vietnam » In South Vietnam the situation worsens as the Viet Cong attack and capture the district headquarters at An Lao and much of the surrounding valley 300 miles northeast of Saigon. South Vietnamese troops regained control only after reinforcements were airlifted into the area by U.S. helicopters. During the course of the action, two U.S. advisors were killed. There were over 300 South Vietnamese casualties and as many as 7,000 villagers were temporarily forced to abandon their homes.

In response, Ambassador Maxwell Taylor, who had just returned from Washington, held a series of conferences with Premier Tran Van Huong, General Nguyen Khanh, and other South Vietnamese leaders. Taylor told them that the United States would provide additional financial aid to help stabilize the worsening situation in the countryside. It was agreed that the funds would be used to strengthen South Vietnam’s military forces (which South Vietnam agreed to increase by 100,000 men) and to “further economic assistance for a variety of reforms of industrial, urban, and rural development.” Nothing was said during these discussions about President Lyndon B. Johnson’s plans to commence the bombing of North Vietnam, which had been decided during Taylor’s meeting with the president and his advisers when Taylor was in Washington earlier in December.

- **Dec 07 1965 – Vietnam War:** McNamara predicts that more U.S. troops will be needed » In a memorandum to President Lyndon B. Johnson, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara states that U.S. troop strength must be substantially augmented “if we are to avoid being defeated there.” Cautioning that such deployments would not ensure military success, McNamara said the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong “continue to believe that the war will be a long one, that time is their ally, and their own staying power is superior to ours.”
- **Dec 07 1967 – Vietnam War:** The situation worsens in South Vietnam, as the Viet Cong attack and capture the district headquarters at An Lao and much of the surrounding valley 300 miles northeast of Saigon. South Vietnamese troops regained control only after reinforcements were airlifted into the area by U.S. helicopters.

- **Dec 07 1975 – Indonesia*East Timor:** *Indonesia invades East Timor* » Early in the morning, Indonesian forces launch a massive invasion of the former Portuguese half of the island of Timor, which lies near Australia in the Timor Sea.

The Portuguese departed East Timor in August 1975, and Indonesian troops soon began infiltrating the border from Indonesian West Timor. On November 28, the democratically elected government of East Timor, fearing an imminent Indonesian invasion, proclaimed the Democratic Republic of East Timor.



On the morning of 7 DEC, Indonesia responded by initiating a naval bombardment of the city of Dili, followed by landings of paratroopers from the air and of marines on the beaches. On 10 DEC, a second invasion force captured the second largest city, Baucau. Elsewhere, East Timorese resistance continued, but by 1978 the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia was essentially complete.

During the initial years of the Indonesian invasion and occupation, more than 100,000 East Timorese died as a direct result of the conflict. Most of the dead were civilians killed by the military or starved to death in internment camps or while hiding in the hills from the Indonesian military. Small groups of East Timorese guerrillas continued their resistance for decades. In 1996, Jose Ramos-Horta and Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to win independence for East Timor.

Indonesian dictator Suharto, who had ordered the 1975 invasion, was ousted from power in 1998, and East Timorese renewed their calls for independence. In 1999, the people of East Timor voted overwhelmingly for independence in a referendum, leading to bloody attacks by Indonesian militia forces. An Australian-led U.N. peacekeeping force was deployed to stop the violence, and in August 2001 East Timor held its first democratic elections to establish an autonomous government.

- **Dec 07 1987 – Cold War:** *Gorbachev Reagan summit* » Despite protests in Washington concerning Soviet human rights abuses, most Americans get swept up in “Gorbymania” as Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev arrives for his summit with President Ronald Reagan. Gorbachev and his wife, Raisa, charmed the American public and media by praising the United States and calling for closer relations between the Soviet Union and America.

Aside from the excitement surrounding Gorbachev (whose face was soon plastered on T-shirts, cups, and posters), the summit with Reagan resulted in one of the most significant arms control agreements of the Cold War. Reagan and Gorbachev signed off on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty, which called for the elimination of all ground, cruise, and ballistic missiles and launchers in

Europe with ranges of 320 to 3,400 miles. By June 1991, the United States had eliminated over 800 missiles and the Soviets had eliminated 1,800 such weapons.

The INF Treaty was the first arms control agreement that eliminated, rather than simply limited, nuclear weapons. The treaty also required on-site inspections to ensure compliance, part of Reagan's famous "trust but verify" credo. Some critics in the United States denounced the treaty, claiming that it would "de-nuke" Europe and leave America's allies at the mercy of the Soviets' massive conventional forces. Most Americans, however, considered it a monumental step toward the reduction of the risk of nuclear war. The treaty was ratified by the Senate and went into effect in June 1988.

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- **Dec 08 1775 – American Revolution:** Patriot forces under Colonel Benedict Arnold and General Richard Montgomery attempted to capture the British-occupied city of Quebec and with it win support for the American cause in Canada. The attack failed, and the effort cost Montgomery his life. The Battle of Quebec was the first major defeat of the Revolutionary War for the Americans.
- **Dec 08 1861 – Civil War:** CSS Sumter captures the whaler Eben Dodge in the Atlantic. The American Civil War is now affecting the Northern whaling industry.
- **Dec 08 1863 – Civil War:** Lincoln issues Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction » President Abraham Lincoln offers his conciliatory plan for reunification of the United States with his Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction.

By this point in the Civil War, it was clear that Lincoln needed to make some preliminary plans for postwar reconstruction. The Union armies had captured large sections of the South, and some states were ready to have their governments rebuilt. The proclamation addressed three main areas of concern. First, it allowed for a full pardon for and restoration of property to all engaged in the rebellion with the exception of the highest Confederate officials and military leaders. Second, it allowed for a new state government to be formed when 10 percent of the eligible voters had taken an oath of allegiance to the United States. Third, the Southern states admitted in this fashion were encouraged to enact plans to deal with the freed slaves so long as their freedom was not compromised.

In short, the terms of the plan were easy for most Southerners to accept. Though the emancipation of slaves was an impossible pill for some Confederates to swallow, Lincoln's plan was charitable, considering the costliness of the war. With the Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, Lincoln was seizing the initiative for reconstruction from Congress. Some Radical Republicans thought the plan was far too easy on the South, but others accepted it because of the president's prestige and leadership. Following Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, the disagreements over the postwar reconstruction policy led to a heated battle between the next president, Andrew Johnson, and Congress.

- **Dec 08, 1914:** The Battle of Falkland Islands occurs as British Navy warships destroy the German squadron of Admiral Graf von Spee in the South Atlantic off the coast of Argentina. Von Spee and two sons serving in his squadron are killed.

- **Dec 10, 1914:** The French begin a series of attacks along the Western Front against the Germans in the Artois region of northern France and Champagne in the south. Hampered by a lack of heavy artillery and muddy winter conditions, the French fail to make any significant gains and both offensives are soon suspended.
- **Dec 08 1941 – WW2:** *The United States declares war on Japan* » As the America’s Pacific fleet lay in ruins at Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt requests, and receives, a declaration of war against Japan.

Leaning heavily on the arm of his son James, a Marine captain, FDR walked haltingly into the House of Representatives at noon to request a declaration of war from the House and address the nation via radio. “Yesterday,” the president proclaimed, “December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.”



FDR delivers the Infamy speech to Congress

Roosevelt’s 10-minute speech, ending with an oath—“So help us God”—was greeted in the House by thunderous applause and stamping of feet. Within one hour, the president had his declaration of war, with only one dissenting vote, from a pacifist in the House. FDR signed the declaration at 4:10 p.m., wearing a black armband to symbolize mourning for those lost at Pearl Harbor.

On both coasts, civilian defense groups were mobilized. In New York, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia ordered the rounding up of Japanese nationals, who were transported to Ellis Island and held in custody indefinitely. In California, antiaircraft batteries were set up on Long Beach and the Hollywood Hills. Reports on supposed spy activity on the part of Japanese Americans began pouring into Washington, even as Japanese Americans paid for space in newspapers to declare unreservedly their loyalty to the United States. The groundwork was being laid for the tragic internment of Japanese Americans, thought a necessary caution at the time but regretted years later as a hysterical and bigoted response.

- **Dec 08 1941 – WW2:** *Jeanette Rankin casts sole vote against WWII* » Montanan Jeanette Rankin, the first woman elected to Congress and a dedicated lifelong pacifist, casts the sole Congressional vote against the U.S. declaration of war on Japan. She was the only member of Congress to vote against U.S. involvement in both World Wars, having been among those who voted against American entry into World War I nearly a quarter of a century earlier.

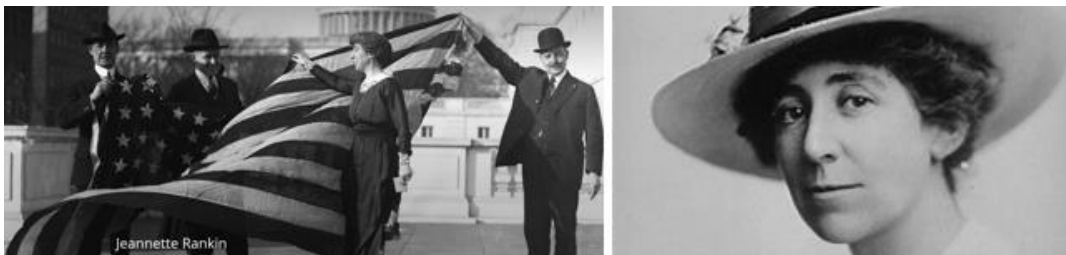
Rankin was a committed pacifist, and she cared little about the damage her beliefs caused her political career. Although some male representatives joined her in voting against World War I in 1917,

many citizens saw her vote as evidence that a woman could not handle the difficult burdens of national leadership. Perhaps as a result, Montanans voted her out of office two years later. Ironically, Rankin won re-election to the House in 1940, just in time to face another vote on war.

While her commitment to pacifism was politically harmful during World War I, Rankin knew that in the case of World War II, it would be downright suicidal. The surprise Japanese attack on the U.S. military base at Pearl Harbor was devastating, and zeal for revenge was at a fever pitch. The vast majority of Americans supported President Roosevelt's call for a declaration of war.

Rankin, however, believed that Roosevelt deliberately provoked the Japanese to attack because he wanted to bring the U.S. into the European war against Germany; she was determined not to cooperate with the president's plan. After a 40-minute debate on the floor of the House, a roll call vote began. When her turn came, Rankin stood and said, "As a woman, I can't go to war and I refuse to send anyone else."

When news of Rankin's vote reached the crowd gathered outside the capitol, some patriots threatened to attack the Montana congresswoman, and police escorted her out of the building. Rankin was vilified in the press, accused of disloyalty, and called "Japanette Rankin," among other impolite names. She stood her ground, however, and never apologized for her vote.



When her term neared completion two years later, Rankin was certain she would not win re-election and chose not to run again. She continued to be an active advocate for pacifism, and led a campaign against the Vietnam War in 1968 when she was 87 years old.

- **Dec 08 1943 – WW2:** U.S. carrier-based planes sink two cruisers and down 72 planes in the Marshall Islands.
- **Dec 08 1944 – WW2:** The United States conducts the longest, most effective air raid on the Pacific island of Iwo Jima.
- **Dec 08 1949 – Cold War:** *Chinese Nationalists move capital to Taiwan* » As they steadily lose ground to the communist forces of Mao Zedong, Chinese Nationalist leaders depart for the island of Taiwan, where they establish their new capital. Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek left for the island the following day. This action marked the beginning of the "two Chinas" scenario that left mainland China under communist control and vexed U.S. diplomacy for the next 30 years. It also signaled the effective end of the long struggle between Chinese Nationalist forces and those of the communist leader Mao Zedong, though scattered Chinese Nationalists continued sporadic combat with the communist armies.

At the time, many observers hoped that the end of the fighting and the Chinese Nationalist decision to establish a separate government on Taiwan might make it easier for foreign governments to recognize the new communist People's Republic of China. For the United States, however, the action merely posed a troubling diplomatic problem. Many in America, including members of the so-called "China Lobby" (individuals and groups from both public and private life who tenaciously supported the Chinese Nationalist cause), called upon the administration of President Harry S. Truman to continue its support of Chiang's government by withholding recognition of the communist government on the mainland.

In fact, the Truman administration's recognition of the Nationalist government on Taiwan infuriated Mao, ending any possibility for diplomatic relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China. In the years after 1949, the United States continued its support of Taiwan, and Mao's government continued to rail against the Nationalist regime off its coast. By the 1970s, however, U.S. policymakers, desirous of opening economic relations with China and hoping to use China as a balance against Soviet power, moved toward a closer relationship with communist China. In 1979, the United States officially recognized the People's Republic of China.

- **Dec 08 1965 – Vietnam War: *Operation Tiger Hound launched*** » In some of the heaviest raids of the war, 150 U.S. Air Force and Navy planes launch Operation Tiger Hound to interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the lower portion of the Laotian panhandle, from Route 9 west of the Demilitarized Zone, south to the Cambodian border. The purpose of this operation, which lasted until 1968, was to reduce North Vietnamese infiltration down the trail into South Vietnam. After 1968, the Tiger Hound missions became part of a new operation called Commando Hunt.
- **Dec 08 1966 – Vietnam War: *North Vietnam rejects Johnson's prisoner exchange proposal*** » The International Red Cross announces in Geneva that North Vietnam has rejected a proposal by President Johnson for a resolution of the prisoner of war situation. He had proposed a joint discussion of fair treatment and possible exchange of war captives held by both sides. The International Red Cross submitted the proposal to North Vietnamese officials in July after Johnson first broached the plan on July 20 at a news conference. No solution was reached on the issue until the Paris Peace Accords were signed in January 1973. By the terms of the accords, all U.S. prisoners were to be released by the following March.
- **Dec 08 1969 – Vietnam War: *Nixon declares Vietnam War is ending*** » At a news conference, President Richard Nixon says that the Vietnam War is coming to a "conclusion as a result of the plan that we have instituted." Nixon had announced at a conference in Midway in June that the United States would be following a new program he termed "Vietnamization."



Under the provisions of this program, South Vietnamese forces would be built up so they could assume more responsibility for the war. As the South Vietnamese forces became more capable, U.S. forces would be withdrawn from combat and returned to the United States. In his speech, Nixon pointed out that he had already ordered the withdrawal of 60,000 U.S. troops. Concurrently, he had issued orders to provide the South Vietnamese with more modern equipment and weapons and increased the advisory effort, all as part of the “Vietnamization” program. As Nixon was holding his press conference, troops from the U.S. 25th Infantry Division (less the Second Brigade) began departing from Vietnam.

Nixon’s pronouncements that the war was ending proved premature. In April 1970, he expanded the war by ordering U.S. and South Vietnamese troops to attack communist sanctuaries in Cambodia. The resulting outcry across the United States led to a number of antiwar demonstrations—it was at one of these demonstrations that the National Guard shot four protesters at Kent State.

Although Nixon did continue to decrease American troop strength in South Vietnam, the fighting continued. In 1972, the North Vietnamese launched a massive invasion of South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese forces reeled under the attack, but eventually prevailed with the help of U.S. airpower. After extensive negotiations and the bombing of North Vietnam in December 1972, the Paris Peace Accords were signed in January 1973. Under the provisions of the Accords, U.S. forces were completely withdrawn. Unfortunately, this did not end the war for the Vietnamese and the fighting continued until April 1975 when Saigon fell to the communists.

- **Dec 08 1987 – Cold War:** *Superpowers agree to reduce nuclear arsenals* » At a summit meeting in Washington, D.C., President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev sign the first treaty between the two superpowers to reduce their massive nuclear arsenals. Previous agreements had merely been attempts by the two Cold War adversaries to limit the growth of their nuclear arsenals. The historic agreement banned ground-launched short- and medium-range missiles, of which the two nations collectively possessed 2,611, most located in Europe and Southeast Asia.



The pact was seen as an important step toward agreement on the reduction of long-range U.S. and Soviet missiles, first achieved in 1991 when President George H. Bush and Gorbachev agreed to destroy more than a quarter of their nuclear warheads. The following year, Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin agreed to drastically reduce their number of long-range missiles to around 3,000 launching systems each by the year 2003. In 2001, after a decade of arms control stalemate, President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin made a preliminary agreement to further reduce their nuclear arsenals to around 2,000 long-range missiles each.

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- **Dec 09 1775 – American Revolution:** *Patriots gain control of Virginia* » The Virginia and North Carolina militias defeat 800 slaves and 200 redcoats serving John Murray, earl of Dunmore and governor of Virginia, at Great Bridge outside Norfolk, ending British royal control of Virginia. The Tory survivors retreated first to Norfolk then to Dunmore’s ship, the Otter, where the majority died of smallpox.

Governor Dunmore had removed to the Tory stronghold of Norfolk after Patriots drove him from the capitol, Williamsburg, in June 1775. On November 7, 1775, he offered emancipation to any slave of a Patriot master willing to join his forces. By November 30, Dunmore’s ranks had swelled and he was convinced of his ability to regain control of the colony. George Washington feared Dunmore was correct and wrote to the Continental Congress from New England, warning them that they needed to see to it that Dunmore was instantly crushed. When Dunmore’s forces won a resounding victory at Kemp’s Landing, it looked like Dunmore’s troops, dubbed the Ethiopian Regiment, would ensure continued British rule in Virginia, despite a backlash against him among slaveholders on both sides of the conflict who were angry over the precedent Dunmore’s move might be setting.

Dunmore was determined to defend Great Bridge, building a stockade, dismantling the main bridge and defending the smaller bridges with cannon. Having taken these precautions, Dunmore then squandered his efforts by underestimating the strength of the Patriot militias. His decision to offer emancipation had incited at least 150 men from across the Carolinas to march north to help drive Dunmore from the state. By contrast, the overconfident Dunmore sent only a few sailors and sixty townsmen from Norfolk to meet them. They got within 15 feet of the Patriots before being shot dead. Within thirty minutes, 150 Loyalists fell. There was only one Patriot fatality. Three hundred of the 800 Black Loyalists survived their enlistment in the Ethiopian Regiment only to confront smallpox on the Otter.

- **Dec 09 1835 – Mexican American War:** *The Texan Army captures San Antonio* » Inspired by the spirited leadership of Benjamin Rush Milam, the newly created Texan Army takes possession of the city of San Antonio, an important victory for the Republic of Texas in its war for independence from Mexico.

Milam was born in 1788 in Frankfort, Kentucky. He became a citizen and soldier of Mexico in 1824, when newly independent Mexico was still under a republican constitution. Like many Americans who immigrated to the Mexican state of Texas, Milam found that the government both welcomed and feared the growing numbers of Americans, and treated them with uneven fairness. When Milam heard in 1835 that Santa Ana had overthrown the Mexican republic and established himself as dictator, Milam renounced his Mexican citizenship and joined the rag-tag army of the newly proclaimed independent Republic of Texas.

After helping the Texas Army capture the city of Goliad, Milam went on a reconnaissance mission to the southwest but returned to join the army for its planned attack on San Antonio-only to learn that the generals were postponing the attack on San Antonio for the winter. Aware that Santa Ana’s forces were racing toward Texas to suppress the rebellion, Milam worried that any hesitation would spell the end of the revolution. Milam made an impassioned call for volunteers, asking: “Who will go with old Ben Milam into San Antonio?”

Inspired by Milam's bold challenge, three hundred men did volunteer, and the Texas Army began its attack on San Antonio at dawn on 5 DEC. By 9 DEC, the defending forces of the Mexican army were badly beaten, and the commanding general surrendered the city. Milam, however, was not there to witness the results of his leadership—he was killed instantly by a sniper bullet on 7 DEC. If Milam had survived, he might well have been among the doomed defenders of the Alamo that were wiped out by Santa Ana's troops the following March.

- **Dec 09 1861 – Civil War:** *Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War created* » Congress creates the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War in an effort to monitor both military progress and President Abraham Lincoln's administration. The War Committee, as it was called, was established in the aftermath of the disastrous Battle of Ball's Bluff, Virginia, in October 1861 and was designed to provide a check over the executive branch's management of the war. The committee was stacked with Radical Republicans and staunch abolitionists, however, and was often biased in its approach to investigations of the Union war effort.

Among other things, the War Committee investigated fraud in government war contracts, the treatment of Union prisoners held in the South, alleged atrocities committed by Confederate troops against Union soldiers, and the massacre of Native Americans at Sand Creek, Colorado in November 1864. Most of the committee's energies were directed towards investigating Union defeats, particularly those of the Army of the Potomac. Many members were bitterly critical of generals like George McClellan and George Meade, Democrats who they believed were "soft" on slavery.

The War Committee was often at odds with the Lincoln administration's handling of the war effort, and had particular problems with the administration's military decisions. At the beginning of the war, the committee was critical because the administration did not have the eradication of slavery as one of its goals. Even after the Emancipation Proclamation, the committee still found fault with many of the administration's decisions. For instance, the group did not want any Democratic generals in the army. Members of the committee often leaked testimony to the press and contributed to the jealousy and distrust among Union generals. Although the committee did help to uncover fraud in war contracts, the lack of military expertise by its members often simply complicated the Northern war effort.

- **Dec 09 1917 – WWI:** After Turkish troops move out of the region after only a single day's fighting, officials of the Holy City of Jerusalem offer the keys to the city to encroaching British troops.
- **Dec 09 1940 – WW2:** *North Africa Campaign* » Two British divisions, half of them composed of Indian troops, attack seven Italian divisions in Egypt. Overwhelmed, the Italian position in Egypt collapsed. Within three days, 40,000 Italian prisoners were taken. The end of the Italian occupation of North Africa had begun.
- **Dec 9 1941 – WW2:** Cuba declares war on Japan.
- **Dec 09 1941 – WW2:** The 19th Bombardment Group attacks Japanese ships off the coast of Vigan, Luzon

- **Dec 09 1946 – Post WW2: Nuremberg Trials** » The beginning of a series of 12 trials begin for war crimes the United States authorities held in their occupation zone in Nuremberg, Germany after the end of World War II. These trials were held before US military courts, not before the International Military Tribunal, but took place in the same rooms at the Palace of Justice.



Defendants in the dock at the Nuremberg trials. The main target of the prosecution was Hermann Göring (at the left edge on the first row of benches), considered to be the most important surviving official in the Third Reich after Hitler's death.

- **Dec 09 1946 – Post WW2: Nuremberg Trials** » The "Doctors' Trial" begins for prosecuting physicians and officers alleged to be involved in Nazi human experimentation and mass murder under the guise of euthanasia. The trial lasted until August 20, 1947. Of the 23 defendants, seven were acquitted and seven received death sentences; the remainder received prison sentences ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment.
- **Dec 09 1950 – Cold War: Harry Gold sent to prison for his role in atomic espionage** » Harry Gold—who had confessed to serving as a courier between Klaus Fuchs, a British scientist who stole top-secret information on the atomic bomb, and Soviet agents—is sentenced to 30 years in jail for his crime. Gold's arrest and confession led to the arrest of David Greenglass, who then implicated his brother-in-law and sister, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.



Gold's arrest was part of a massive FBI investigation into Soviet espionage, particularly the theft of atomic secrets. Gold, a 39-year-old research chemist, made the acquaintance of British atomic scientist Klaus Fuchs during the latter's trips to the United States during World War II. Fuchs worked at the Los Alamos laboratory on the Manhattan Project, the top secret U.S. program to develop an atomic weapon. David Greenglass was also employed at Los Alamos. In February 1950, Fuchs was arrested in Great Britain and charged with passing atomic secrets on to the Soviets. He was convicted and sentenced to 14 years in a British prison. Fuchs then accused Gold of having been the go-between with Soviet agents.

Gold was picked up a short time later and eventually confessed to his part. He explained that, at the time, he did not believe that he was helping an enemy, but was instead assisting a wartime ally of the United States. Further questioning of Gold led him to implicate David Greenglass. Greenglass then informed on Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, claiming that both of them actively spied for the Soviet Union during World War II and after. The Rosenbergs were later convicted and executed for espionage.

- **Dec 09 1965 – Vietnam War:** *Newspaper reports on bombing over North Vietnam* » An article in the New York Times asserts that the U.S. bombing campaign has neither destabilized North Vietnam's economy nor appreciably reduced the flow of its forces into South Vietnam.

These observations were strikingly similar to an earlier Defense Intelligence Agency analysis, which concluded that “the idea that destroying, or threatening to destroy, North Vietnam's industry would pressure Hanoi into calling it quits seems, in retrospect, a colossal misjudgment.”

The first air strikes against North Vietnam were flown in the fall of 1964, in retaliation for two attacks on American warships in the Gulf of Tonkin (although the second reported attack has never been verified). Additional strikes, carried out under the name Operation Flaming Dart, were ordered in February 1965 in response to Viet Cong attacks on a U.S. Army barracks at Pleiku and a nearby helicopter base, which resulted in the deaths of nine Americans. When the Viet Cong attacked other U.S. facilities in South Vietnam, President Johnson initiated Operation Rolling Thunder in March 1965, an intensified air campaign against North Vietnam. He hoped that this campaign would relieve some of the pressure on South Vietnam, where the situation was rapidly deteriorating. Unfortunately, the bombing campaign did not have the desired results and Johnson had to commit U.S. ground troops to stabilize the situation.

- **Dec 09 1971 – Vietnam War:** For the first time since the Paris peace talks began in May 1968, both sides refuse to set another meeting date for continuation of the negotiations.
- **Dec 09 1992 – U.S.*Somalia:** *U.S Marines storm Mogadishu, Somalia* » United States Marines (1800 of them) arrive in Mogadishu, Somalia, to spearhead a multinational force aimed at restoring order in the conflict-ridden country.

Following centuries of colonial rule by countries including Portugal, Britain and Italy, Mogadishu became the capital of an independent Somalia in 1960. Less than 10 years later, a military group led by Major General Muhammad Siad Barre seized power and declared Somalia a socialist state. A drought in the mid-1970s combined with an unsuccessful rebellion by ethnic Somalis in a neighboring province of Ethiopia to deprive many of food and shelter. By 1981, close to 2 million of the country's inhabitants were homeless. Though a peace accord was signed with Ethiopia in 1988, fighting increased between rival clans within Somalia, and in January 1991 Barre was forced to flee the capital. Over the next 23 months, Somalia's civil war killed some 50,000 people; another 300,000 died of starvation as United Nations peacekeeping forces struggled in vain to restore order and provide relief amid the chaos of war.

In early December 1992, outgoing U.S. President George H.W. Bush sent the contingent of Marines to Mogadishu as part of a mission dubbed *Operation Restore Hope*. Backed by the U.S. troops, international aid workers were soon able to restore food distribution and other humanitarian aid operations. Sporadic violence continued, including the murder of 24 U.N. soldiers from Pakistan in

1993. As a result, the U.N. authorized the arrest of General Mohammed Farah Aidid, leader of one of the rebel clans. On October 3, 1993, during an attempt to make the arrest, rebels shot down two of the U.S. Army's Black Hawk helicopters and killed 18 American soldiers.



As horrified TV viewers watched images of the bloodshed—including footage of Aidid's supporters dragging the body of one dead soldier through the streets of Mogadishu, cheering—President Bill Clinton immediately gave the order for all American soldiers to withdraw from Somalia by March 31, 1994. Other Western nations followed suit. When the last U.N. peacekeepers left in 1995, ending a mission that had cost more than \$2 billion, Mogadishu still lacked a functioning government. A ceasefire accord signed in Kenya in 2002 failed to put a stop to the violence, and though a new parliament was convened in 2004, rival factions in various regions of Somalia continue to struggle for control of the troubled nation.

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- **Dec 10 1864 – Civil War:** *Sherman arrives in front of Savannah* » Union General William T. Sherman completes his March to the Sea when he arrives in front of Savannah, Georgia. Since mid-November of that year, Sherman's army had been sweeping from Atlanta across the state to the south and east towards Savannah, one of the last Confederate seaports still unoccupied by Union forces. Along the way, Sherman destroyed farms and railroads, burned storehouses, and fed his army off the land. In his own words, Sherman intended to “make Georgia howl,” a plan that was approved by President Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant, general-in-chief of the Union armies.

The city of Savannah was fortified and defended by some 10,000 Confederates under the command of General William Hardee. The Rebels flooded the rice fields around Savannah, so only a few narrow causeways provided access to the city. Sherman's army was running low on supplies and he had not made contact with supply ships off the coast. His army had been completely cut off from the North, and only the reports of destruction provided any evidence of its whereabouts. Sherman directed General Oliver O. Howard to the coast to locate friendly ships. Howard dispatched Captain William Duncan and two comrades to contact the Union fleet, but nothing was heard of the trio for several days. Duncan located a Union gunboat that carried him to Hilton Head, South Carolina. Supply ships were sent to Savannah, and Duncan continued on to Washington, D.C., to deliver news of the successful March to the Sea to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.

For ten days, Hardee held out as Sherman prepared for an attack. Realizing the futility of the situation, Hardee fled the city on December 20 and slipped northward to fight another day.

- **Dec 10 1898 – Spanish American War:** *Treaty of Paris ends Spanish-American War* » In France, the Treaty of Paris is signed, formally ending the Spanish-American War and granting the United States its first overseas empire.

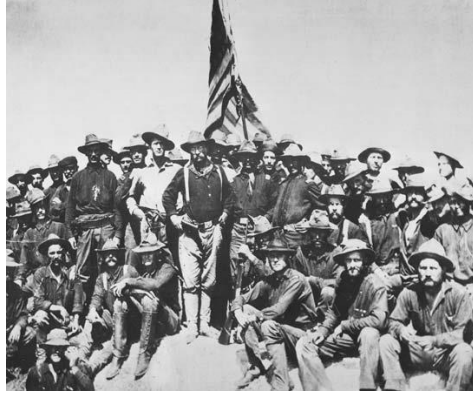


USS Maine entering Havana harbor, January 1898

The Spanish-American War had its origins in the rebellion against Spanish rule that began in Cuba in 1895. The repressive measures that Spain took to suppress the guerrilla war, such as herding Cuba's rural population into disease-ridden garrison towns, were graphically portrayed in U.S. newspapers and enflamed public opinion. In January 1898, violence in Havana led U.S. authorities to order the battleship USS Maine to the city's port to protect American citizens. On 15 FEB, a massive explosion of unknown origin sank the Maine in Havana harbor, killing 260 of the 400 American crewmembers aboard. An official U.S. Naval Court of Inquiry ruled in March, without much evidence, that the ship was blown up by a mine, but it did not directly place the blame on Spain. Much of Congress and a majority of the American public expressed little doubt that Spain was responsible, however, and called for a declaration of war.

In April, the U.S. Congress prepared for war, adopting joint congressional resolutions demanding a Spanish withdrawal from Cuba and authorizing President William McKinley to use force. On 23 APR, President McKinley asked for 125,000 volunteers to fight against Spain. The next day, Spain issued a declaration of war. The United States declared war on 25 APR. On 1 MAY, the U.S. Asiatic Squadron under Commodore George Dewey destroyed the Spanish Pacific fleet at Manila Bay in the first battle of the Spanish-American War. Dewey's decisive victory cleared the way for the U.S. occupation of Manila in August and the eventual transfer of the Philippines from Spanish to American control.

On the other side of the world, a Spanish fleet docked in Cuba's Santiago harbor in May after racing across the Atlantic from Spain. A superior U.S. naval force arrived soon after and blockaded the harbor entrance. In June, the U.S. Army Fifth Corps landed in Cuba with the aim of marching to Santiago and launching a coordinated land and sea assault on the Spanish stronghold. Included among the U.S. ground troops were the Theodore Roosevelt-led "Rough Riders," a collection of western cowboys and eastern blue bloods officially known as the First U.S. Voluntary Cavalry. On 1 JUL, the Americans won the Battle of San Juan Hill, and the next day they began a siege of Santiago. On 3 JUL, the Spanish fleet was destroyed off Santiago by U.S. warships under Admiral William Sampson, and on 17 JUL the Spanish surrendered the city—and thus Cuba—to the Americans. In Puerto Rico, Spanish forces likewise crumbled in the face of superior U.S. forces, and on 12 AUG an armistice was signed between Spain and the United States, ending the brief and one-sided conflict.



On 10 DEC, the Treaty of Paris officially ended the Spanish-American War. The once-proud Spanish empire was virtually dissolved as the United States took over much of Spain's overseas holdings. Puerto Rico and Guam were ceded to the United States, the Philippines were bought for \$20 million, and Cuba became a U.S. protectorate. Philippine insurgents who fought against Spanish rule during the war immediately turned their guns against the new occupiers, and 10 times more U.S. troops died suppressing the Philippines than in defeating Spain.

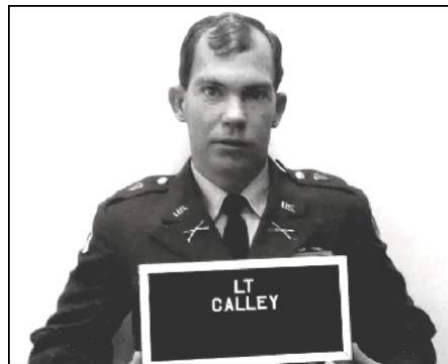
- **Dec 10 1918 – Post WWI:** U.S. troops are called to guard Berlin as a coup is feared.
- **Dec 10 1941 – WW2:** *Japan becomes master of the Pacific and South China Sea* » 4,000 Japanese troops land on the Philippine Islands, while Japanese aircraft sink the British warships Prince of Wales and Repulse. Guam, an American-controlled territory, was also seized. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill finally exclaims, “We have lost control of the sea.”

The attack on Pearl Harbor was only one step in a larger plan to dominate the Pacific, which entailed knocking out first American, then British, naval opposition. Japanese bombing raids on Guam, Midway Island, and Wake Island followed the attack on the American fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor. American airfields there were destroyed, as were Clark and Iba airfields in the Philippines, wiping out more than half of the United States' aircraft dedicated to the Far East. These bombing raids were followed up, on December 10, by 2,000 Japanese troops that landed on the Philippine island of Luzon in the north, and another 2,000 that landed at Vigan on the western coast. And in Guam, 700 Japanese Special Naval Landing Forces invaded and occupied the American-controlled military outpost of Guam after only a 25-minute military engagement, resulting in the capture of 500 Americans soldiers.

The United States was not alone in its struggle for the Pacific. Great Britain had also declared war on the Empire of Japan on December 8. The next day, Japan occupied the capital of Thailand and then landed in the Malay Peninsula, which could not be repulsed by the outmatched Australian and Indian troops. Britain responded by dispatching Force Z, their Royal Navy unit dedicated to supporting Singapore, when Japanese bombers spotted Z's battleship, the Prince of Wales, and its sister ship, the Repulse, sailing for Kuantan on the eastern coast of the Malay Peninsula, on the erroneous belief that the Japanese had just put troops ashore there. The bombers rained down torpedo bombs on the British warships, sinking them and killing 840 men. “In all the war, I have never received a more direct shock,” Churchill lamented.

And the Japanese were far from finished: The humiliation of the United States in the Philippines and a more extensive occupation of Indochina and the South Pacific were still to come.

- **Dec 10 1943 – WW2:** Franklin D. Roosevelt signs a bill that postpones a draft of pre-Pearl Harbor fathers
- **Dec 10 1970 – Vietnam War:** *Calley trial defense begins* » The defense opens its case in the murder trial of Lt. William Calley. Charged with six specifications of premeditated murder, Calley was a platoon leader in Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Infantry Brigade (Light) of the 23rd (Americal) Division. He was tried because of his leadership role in the My Lai massacres. On March 16, 1968, Calley led his troops to murder innocent Vietnamese civilians living in a cluster of hamlets located in Son Tinh District in Quang Ngai Province in the northern coastal lowlands.



Citing “superior’s orders,” Defense Attorney George Lattimer contended that Capt. Ernest Medina, Calley’s company commander, told his men that they were finally going to fight the enemy. He reportedly ordered “every living thing” killed. Lattimer also cited poor training of the platoon, the rage of the men who had seen their buddies killed, and the expectation of fierce resistance as additional factors contributing to the incident. The lawyer also charged that higher commanders on the ground and in the air observed the episode but did nothing.

Despite Lattimer’s argument, Calley was found guilty of murdering 22 civilians and sentenced to life imprisonment. His sentence was reduced to 20 years by the Court of Military Appeals and further reduced to 10 years by the Secretary of the Army. Proclaimed a “scapegoat” by much of the public, Calley was paroled by President Richard Nixon in 1974, after serving about a third of his 10-year sentence.

- **Dec 10 1970 – Vietnam War:** *Breakthrough appears near in Paris peace talks* » Technical experts on both sides begin work on the language of a proposed peace accord, giving rise to hope that a final agreement is near. A peace agreement was signed on January 23, 1973.

The peace agreement came out of secret negotiations National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger was conducting with North Vietnamese representatives at a villa outside Paris. Gen. Alexander Haig, who had been briefing President Richard Nixon on the Paris talks, was alerted to fly to Saigon with the document when it was completed, so that Saigon could sign while the United States and Hanoi signed in Paris.

Unfortunately, the talks broke down two days later when South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu balked at the proposed agreement because it did not require North Vietnamese troops to leave the south. The North Vietnamese negotiators refused to discuss the withdrawal of their troops and walked out. They returned only after Nixon ordered the bombing of North Vietnam. After 11 days of bombing, Hanoi agreed to send negotiators back to Paris. When the talks resumed in January 1973, the negotiations moved ahead quickly. On January 23, the United States, North Vietnam, the Republic of Vietnam, and the Viet Cong signed a cease-fire agreement that took effect five days later.

- **Dec 10 1977 – Cold War:** *Soviets arrest dissidents on United Nations Human Rights Day* » In Moscow, Soviet officials arrest four dissidents and prevent at least 20 others from attending a peaceful protest against communist political oppression on United Nations Human Rights Day. According to some of the protesters, Soviet officials threatened them with violence should the protest be held. The incident was more evidence of an increasingly hard line being taken by the Soviet government against any political protest.

Approximately 25 protesters met at the statue of the Russian poet Pushkin in Moscow to assert their right to freedom of assembly, which had been guaranteed by the new Soviet constitution approved in October. Twenty other dissidents had been dissuaded from attending when they saw Soviet plainclothes police stationed outside their apartments. In addition, Soviet officials detained four other known dissidents to keep them from the protest. Andrei Sakharov, perhaps the most famous Soviet political dissident, refrained from attending because he feared that violence would break out. The protest, however, was peaceful and uneventful. Nevertheless, the Soviet actions were a chilling reminder that political freedom in Russia was still far from being a reality. Human rights abuses in the Soviet Union continued to be a sore point in U.S.-Soviet relations into the Gorbachev years of the 1980s.

- **Dec 10 1989 – Cold War:** *Mongolia Moves to Become a Democracy* » Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj announces the establishment of Mongolia's democratic movement that changes the second oldest communist country into a democracy. The first open pro-democracy public demonstration occurred in front of the Youth Cultural Center in Ulaanbaatar in the morning. There, Elbegdorj announced the creation of the Mongolian Democratic Union. There the Democratic Union-first pro-democracy movement in Mongolia was born. The protesters called for Mongolia to adopt perestroika and glasnost. Dissident leaders demanded free elections and economic reform, but within the context of a "human democratic socialism". The protesters injected a nationalist element into the protests by using traditional Mongolian script—which most Mongolians could not read—as a symbolic repudiation of the political system which had imposed the Mongolian Cyrillic alphabet.

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- **Dec 11 1777 – American Revolution:** *British delay Washington's march to Valley Forge* » General George Washington begins marching 12,000 soldiers of his Continental Army from Whitemarsh to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, for the winter. As Washington's men began crossing the Schuylkill River, they were surprised by a regiment of several thousand British troops led by General Charles Cornwallis. Cornwallis came across the continental forces by chance as he followed General William Howe's orders to forage for supplies in the hills outside Philadelphia.



General Cornwallis

Upon spotting General Cornwallis and the British troops, General Washington ordered his soldiers to retreat across the Schuylkill River, where they destroyed the bridge to prevent the British from pursuing them. After engaging the British for a short time from the opposite side of the river, Washington and the Continental Army retreated back to Whitemarsh, delaying their march to Valley Forge for several days.

The Continental Army finally arrived safely at Valley Forge on 19 DEC, where they would face a winter of starvation, disease and death. While they suffered, the Prussian military advisor Frederick Wilhelm Augustus Steuben, also known as Baron von Steuben, drilled the miserable men in proper military discipline. Von Steuben joined the French-born Marquis de Lafayette and Baron Johann de Kalb as well as Thaddeus Kosciuszko and Count Casimir Pulaski from Poland in the effort to turn the rag-tag rebels into a well-trained regiment. Come spring, Washington would have a professional army with which to fight the British.

General Howe chose to enjoy the comparative luxury and civility of winter in Philadelphia instead of engaging Washington's forces at Valley Forge, despite their weakened and ill-defended state. His decision to cease fire during the winter months combined with the shocking news of America's new alliance with France led to his recall. General Henry Clinton took over command of the British army with orders to leave Philadelphia immediately for New York and the British reworked their strategy to confront a transatlantic war with France.

- **Dec 11 1815 – Post War of 1812:** *Madison presents trade agreement to Congress* » President James Madison (1809-1817) presents to Congress a trade agreement with Great Britain that would regulate commerce between the two countries. The agreement came just one year after the signing of the treaty that ended the War of 1812. The commerce agreement secured America's autonomy on the high seas, but more importantly, it signified Britain's acceptance of America as a separate nation with the will and capacity to defend its interests.

Resentment left over from the American Revolution (1775-1783) between Britain and the United States erupted into a second full-scale war when Britain began harassing American shipping. Beginning during the administration of America's third president, Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809), British warships occasionally fired on and boarded American navy or merchant ships while patrolling the seas for enemy French. To add insult to injury, the British "impressed" or involuntarily drafted American sailors to serve on British warships. This affront to America's autonomy led Madison to ask Congress for a declaration of war against Britain in 1812. In 1814, the British captured the city of Washington and

burned the White House, but not before Madison's plucky wife, Dolley, saved a portrait of George Washington from looters. The U.S. emerged victorious in this "second war of independence" against Britain and as a result gained confidence in its military capabilities and a stronger sense of national identity.

During the ensuing peace negotiations, Madison's administration extended an olive branch to the British, suggesting that the two countries shared mutual interests and ought to be collaborating in commerce rather than endangering "their future harmony." Although Madison described the 1815 maritime trade agreement as "conciliatory," he also emphasized America's insistence that American navigation be "confined to American seamen," free from international (i.e. British) interference. Madison thus signaled to the world that America would continue to vigorously defend her territory and economic interests.

- **Dec 11 1862 – Civil War: *Federals occupy Fredericksburg*** » The Union Army of the Potomac occupies Fredericksburg, Virginia, as General Ambrose Burnside continues to execute his plan to capture the Confederate capital at Richmond, Virginia. However, the occupation did not happen until three weeks after Burnside's army had arrived at Falmouth, Virginia, just across the river from Fredericksburg. Due to a logistical error, pontoon bridges had not been available so the army could not cross; the delay allowed Confederate General Robert E. Lee ample time to post his Army of Northern Virginia along Marye's Heights above Fredericksburg.

Burnside replaced General George McClellan as head of the Army of the Potomac in early November 1862. He devised a plan to move his army quickly down the Rappahannock River, cross the river, and race Lee's army south to Richmond. Everything went according to plan as the Yankees sped south from Warrenton, Virginia. Burnside surprised Lee with his swiftness—the leading Union corps covered 40 miles in two days. The entire army was at Falmouth by November 19. Although ready to cross the Rappahannock, the army did not begin receiving the pontoon bridges until the end of the month due to mistakes made by the engineering corps. The delay allowed Lee to move his troops into position on the opposite side of the river. President Abraham Lincoln visited his army at the end of November, and, realizing that the element of surprise was lost, characterized Burnside's plan as "somewhat risky."



On 11 DEC, Burnside's engineers finally began to assemble the bridges. Confederate snipers in Fredericksburg picked away at the builders, so Yankee artillery began a barrage that reduced to rubble many of the buildings along the river. Three regiments ran the sharpshooters out of the town, and the bridge was completed soon after. By evening on the 11th, the Union army was crossing the Rappahannock. By the next day, the entire army was on the other side and Burnside planned the actual attack.

The Battle of Fredericksburg, which took place on December 13, was an enormous defeat for the Army of the Potomac. Lee lost less than 5,000 men while Burnside lost some 12,600.

- **Dec 10 1863 – Civil War:** *Florida's Saltworks* » A Union flotilla of gunboats (Restless, Bloomer and Caroline) enter St. Andrew's Bay, and begin bombardment of Confederate quarters in the town of St. Andrew (present-day Panama City). The entire town was destroyed by the fire. They then proceeded to the salt works on West Bay, destroying the salt works lined on each side of the bay for 7 miles, belonging to private individuals, numbering at least 198 different works, each averaging two boilers and ten kettles each, which, with a large quantity of salt, were destroyed

The strategic importance of salt to the Confederacy was not initially apparent to the Union's East Gulf Squadron command until they noted that nearly every blockade runner captured contained salt as at least a portion of its cargo. It was then that the squadron command realized that a concentrated effort to find and destroy these works would be a major strategic blow to the Confederate war effort. In December 1863 these focused raids began, concentrating on the epicenter of Florida salt production, St. Andrews Bay.

- **Dec 11 1911 – WW1:** *Yuan Shih-kai accepts Chinese throne* » With war raging in Europe, conflict also reigns in the Far East between two traditional enemies, Japan and an internally-divided China. On December 11, 1915, the first president of the new Chinese republic, Yuan Shih-kai, who had come to power in the wake of revolution in 1911 and the fall of the Manchu Dynasty in 1912, accepts the title of emperor of China.



Japan had declared war on Germany in August 1914, capturing the most important German overseas naval base at Tsingtao, on China's Shantung peninsula, by amphibious assault. In January 1915, Japan's imperialist-minded foreign minister, Kato Takaaki, presented China with the so-called 21 Demands, which included the extension of direct Japanese control over more of Shantung, southern Manchuria, and eastern Inner Mongolia and the seizure of more territory, including islands in the South Pacific controlled by Germany.

If accepted in their entirety, the 21 Demands would have essentially reduced China to a Japanese protectorate. Though Yuan, a former general and China's president since February 1912, when he succeeded Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Kuomintang (KMT) or Nationalist Peoples' party, was forced to accept all but the most radical of the demands, he attempted to use Chinese anger over them to justify his bid for restoring the monarchy and installing himself as emperor. Having already dismissed the Chinese parliament and expelled the KMT party from the government, he was now ruling through

provincial military governors throughout the country. The return to monarchy was met by such strong opposition within and outside of China, including from some of those same military governors, that Yuan was quickly forced to return the country to the republican form of government. He died in 1916.

- **Dec 11 1941 – WW2:** Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, following the Americans' 9 DEC declaration of war on the Empire of Japan in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Cuba also declares war on Germany and Italy.
- **Dec 11 1941 – WW2:** OPA ordered the temporary end of tire sales while it created 7,500 unpaid, volunteer three-person tire ration boards around the country. There was a shortage of rubber for tires since the Japanese quickly conquered the rubber-producing regions of Southeast Asia. Although synthetic rubber had been invented before the war, it had been unable to compete with natural rubber commercially, so the U.S. did not have enough manufacturing capacity at the start of the war to make synthetic rubber. Throughout the war, rationing of gasoline was motivated by a desire to conserve rubber, as much as by a desire to conserve gasoline. A national speed limit of 35 miles per hour was imposed to save fuel and rubber for tires.



- **Dec 11 1943 – WW2:** U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull demands that Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria withdraw from the war.
- **Dec 11 1944 – WW2:** *Holocaust* » At Hartheim, German authorities carry out the last gassing of inmates. Under SS guard, Mauthausen prisoners dismantled the killing facility. Hartheim was one of six gassing installations for adults established as part of the "euthanasia" program. Between April 1940 and December 1944, the Germans killed approximately 30,000 individuals, the majority of them mentally and physically disabled patients. Alongside "euthanasia" victims, some 6,000 prisoners from Mauthausen, Gusen, and Dachau were also gassed at the facility.
- **Dec 11 1945 – U.S. Air Force:** A Boeing B-29 Superfortress shatters all records by crossing the United States in five hours and 27 minutes.
- **Dec 11 1946 – Post WW2:** *UNICEF founded* » In the aftermath of World War II, the General Assembly of the United Nations votes to establish the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), an organization to help provide relief and support to children living in countries devastated by the war.

After the food and medical crisis of the late 1940s passed, UNICEF continued its role as a relief organization for the children of troubled nations and during the 1970s grew into a vocal advocate of children's rights. During the 1980s, UNICEF assisted the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. After its introduction to the U.N. General Assembly in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child became the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, and UNICEF played a key role in ensuring its enforcement.

Of the 184 member states of the United Nations, only two countries have failed to ratify the treaty—Somalia and the United States. Somalia does not currently have an internationally recognized government, so ratification is impossible, and the United States, which was one of the original signatories of the convention, has failed to ratify the treaty because of concerns about its potential impact on national sovereignty and the parent-child relationship.

- **Dec 11 1961 – Vietnam War:** *First U.S. helicopters arrive in South Vietnam* » The ferry carrier, USNS Core, arrives in Saigon with the first U.S. helicopter unit. This contingent included 33 Vertol H-21C Shawnee helicopters and 400 air and ground crewmen to operate and maintain them. Their assignment was to airlift South Vietnamese Army troops into combat.

USNS CORE (T-CVU 11)



- **Dec 11 1969 – Vietnam War:** *Paratroopers depart South Vietnam* » Paratroopers from the U.S. Third Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, depart from Vietnam. The unit was sent to Vietnam in February 1968 as an emergency measure in response to the Communist 1968 Tet Offensive. Landing at Chu Lai, the unit was attached to the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) and given the mission of protecting the ancient capital of Hue in the region just south of the Demilitarized Zone. In September 1968, the Third Brigade was moved south to counter enemy forces around Saigon. It was assigned to the Capital Military Assistance Command and ordered to secure the western approaches to the city to prevent ground and rocket attacks against the Saigon-Tan Son Nhut airport complex.

When the situation in South Vietnam stabilized, the Third Brigade was withdrawn as part of the second increment of U.S. troop withdrawals called for under President Nixon's Vietnamization program. The brigade returned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where it rejoined the 82nd Airborne Division as part of the United States Army strategic reserve.

- **Dec 11 1969 – Russia*Chechnya:** *Yeltsin orders Russian forces into Chechnya* » In the largest Russian military offensive since the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan, thousands of troops and hundreds of tanks pour into the breakaway Russian republic of Chechnya. Encountering only light resistance, Russian forces had by evening pushed to the outskirts of the Chechen capital of Grozny, where several thousand Chechen volunteers vowed a bitter fight against the Russians.



With the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Chechnya, like many of the other republics encompassed by the former Soviet Union, declared its independence. However, unlike Georgia, the Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and the other former Soviet states, Chechnya held only the barest autonomy under Soviet rule and was not considered one of the 15 official Soviet republics. Instead, Chechnya is regarded as one of many republics within the Russian Federation. Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who permitted the dissolution of the Soviet Union, would not tolerate the secession of a state within territorial Russia.

About the size of Connecticut and located in southeastern Russia on the Caspian Sea, Chechnya was conquered by the Russians in the 1850s as the Russian empire pushed south toward the Middle East. Its people are largely Muslim and fiercely independent, and the region has been a constant irritant to its Russian and Soviet rulers.

In August 1991, Dzhokhar Dudayev, a Chechen politician and former Soviet air force general, toppled Chechnya's local communist government and established an anti-Russian autocratic state. President Yeltsin feared the secession of Chechnya would prompt a domino effect of independence movements within the vast Russian Federation. He also hoped to recover Chechnya's valuable oil resources. After ineffective attempts at funding Chechen opposition groups, a Russian invasion began on December 11, 1994.

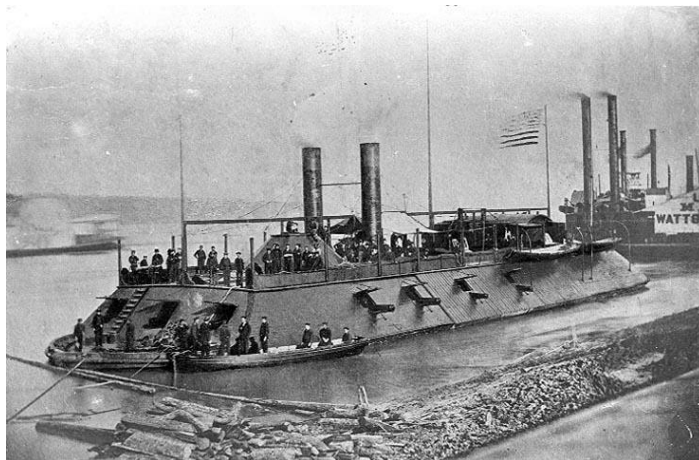
After the initial gains of the Russian army, the Chechen rebels demonstrated a fierce resistance in Grozny, and thousands of Russian troops died and many more Chechen civilians were killed during almost two years of heavy fighting. In August 1996, Grozny was retaken by the Chechen rebels after a year of Russian occupation, and a cease-fire was declared. In 1997, the last humiliated Russian troops left Chechnya. Despite a peace agreement that left Chechnya a de facto independent state, Chechnya remained officially part of Russia.

In 1999, Yeltsin's government ordered a second invasion of Chechnya after bombings in Moscow and other cities were linked to Chechen militants. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Yeltsin's handpicked successor as Russian leader, said of the Chechen terrorists, "we will rub them out, even in the toilet." In 2000, President Putin escalated Russian military involvement in Chechnya after terrorist bombings in Russian cities continued. In this second round of post-Soviet fighting in Chechnya, the Russian army has been accused of many atrocities in its efforts to suppress Chechen militancy. A peace agreement remains elusive.

- **Dec 11 1972 – NASA:** Challenger, the lunar lander for Apollo 17, touches down on the moon's surface. This is the last time that men visit the moon.

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- **Dec 12 1753 – French & Indian War:** George Washington, the adjutant of Virginia, delivers an ultimatum to the French forces at Fort Le Boeuf, south of Lake Erie, reiterating Britain’s claim to the entire Ohio River valley.
- **Dec 12 1770 – Pre American Revolution:** The British soldiers responsible for the “Boston Massacre” are acquitted on murder charges. The Boston Massacre had a major impact on relations between Britain and the American colonists. It further incensed colonists already weary of British rule and unfair taxation and roused them to fight for independence.
- **Dec 12 1781 – American Revolution:** *Second Battle of Ushant* » A British fleet led by HMS Victory defeats a French fleet and captures 15 transports, 1,062 soldiers & 548 seamen.
- **Dec 12 1862 – Civil War:** USS Cairo sinks on the Yazoo River, becoming the first armored ship to be sunk by an electrically detonated mine.



USS Cairo Ironclad

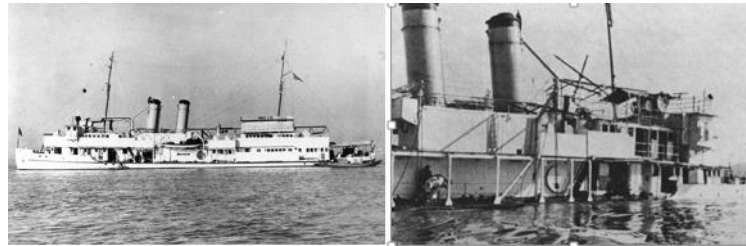
- **Dec 12 1863 – Civil War:** Orders are given in Richmond, Virginia, that no more supplies from the Union should be received by Federal prisoners.
- **Dec 12 1917 – WWI:** *French soldiers killed in train accident* » More than 500 French soldiers are killed when their train derails in Modane, France, on this day in 1917. The troops were returning from fighting World War I in Italy. There was ample warning that the conditions were dangerous, but the French officers ignored the expert advice and insisted that the overcrowded train proceed as scheduled.

More than a 1,000 (some estimate the number to be as high as 1,200) French soldiers were trying to travel between Turin, Italy, and Lyon, France, through the Alps in southeastern France to return home in time for Christmas. However, so many coach cars were attached to a single locomotive that the engineer in charge protested and refused to leave the station. The danger was not so much that the locomotive would not be able to pull the 19 cars, but that it wouldn’t be able to stop the cars since there were no brakes on 16 of the coaches.

A French officer, anxious to get the men home for the holidays, pulled out a gun and threatened the engineer until he agreed to begin the trip. Unfortunately, the engineer's concerns were valid: As the train came out of the Mount Cern tunnel and approached the town of Modane in France, it had to descend a steep grade. The brakes could not hold the weight of the crowded coach cars and the train went out of control down the hill. Near the bottom, the train came to a wooden bridge and shot off the rails. The coach cars piled up; as they were made mostly of wood, many caught fire immediately.

The death toll was estimated at between 500 and 800 men. The fire was so intense that it burned at least 400 of the bodies beyond recognition. Although the army attempted to cover up the details of the tragedy because it implicated French officers, the engineer—who survived—finally released the full story some 15 years later.

- **Dec 12 1917 – Post WWI:** The last Allied troops withdraw from the Saar region in Germany.
- **Dec 12 1937 – Sino*Japanese War:** *USS Panay sunk by Japanese* » During the battle for Nanking in the Sino-Japanese War, the U.S. gunboat Panay is attacked and sunk by Japanese warplanes in Chinese waters. The American vessel, neutral in the Chinese-Japanese conflict, was escorting U.S. evacuees and three Standard Oil barges away from Nanking, the war-torn Chinese capital on the Yangtze River. After the Panay was sunk, the Japanese fighters machine-gunned lifeboats and survivors huddling on the shore of the Yangtze. Two U.S. sailors and a civilian passenger were killed and 11 personnel seriously wounded, setting off a major crisis in U.S.-Japanese relations.



Although the Panay's position had been reported to the Japanese as required, the neutral vessel was clearly marked, and the day was sunny and clear, the Japanese maintained that the attack was unintentional, and they agreed to pay \$2 million in reparations. Two neutral British vessels were also attacked by the Japanese in the final days of the battle for Nanking.

- **Dec 12 1941 – WW2:** Fifty-four Japanese A6M Zero fighters raid Batangas Field, Philippines. Jesús Villamor and four Filipino fighter pilots fend them off; César Basa becomes the first Filipino pilot killed in combat.
- **Dec 12 1941 – WW2:** USMC F4F Wildcats sink the first 4 major Japanese ships off Wake Island.
- **Dec 12 1941 – WW2:** The U.S. Navy takes control of the largest and most luxurious ocean liner on the seas at that time, France's Normandie, while it is docked at New York City. Shortly thereafter, the conversion for U.S. wartime use began. It was renamed the USS Lafayette.



- **Dec 12 1942 – WW2:** German troops begin Operation Winter Tempest, an attempt to relieve encircled Axis forces during the Battle of Stalingrad.
- **Dec 12 1968 – Vietnam War:** *Procedural questions cause difficulty at the peace talks* » The Paris Peace talks, which opened on 10 MAY, continue to be plagued by procedural questions that impeded any meaningful progress. South Vietnamese Premier Nguyen Cao Ky refused to consent to any permanent seating plan that would place the National Liberation Front (NLF) on an equal footing with Saigon. North Vietnam and the NLF likewise balked at any arrangement that would effectively recognize the Saigon as the legitimate government of South Vietnam. Prolonged discussions over the shape of the negotiating table was finally resolved by the placement of two square tables separated by a round table. Chief U.S. negotiator Averell Harriman proposed this arrangement so that NLF representatives could join the North Vietnamese team without having to be acknowledged by Saigon’s delegates; similarly, South Vietnamese negotiators could sit with their American allies without having to be acknowledged by the North Vietnamese and the NLF representatives. Such seemingly insignificant matters became fodder for many arguments between the delegations at the negotiations.
- **Dec 12 1969 – Vietnam War:** *Philippine soldiers depart South Vietnam* » The Philippine Civic Action Group, a 1,350-man contingent from the Army of the Philippines, departs South Vietnam. The contingent was part of the Free World Military Forces, an effort by President Lyndon B. Johnson to enlist allies for the United States and South Vietnam. By securing support from other nations, Johnson hoped to build an international consensus behind his policies in Vietnam. The effort was also known as the “many flags” program.

The Philippine Civic Action Group entered Vietnam in September 1966, setting up operations in a base camp in Tay Ninh Province northwest of Saigon. The force included an engineer construction battalion, medical and rural community development teams, a security battalion, a field artillery battery, and a logistics and headquarters element.



In agreeing to commit troops, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos was partially motivated by the desire for financial aid. In return for the military assistance, the United States not only agreed to pay for the deployment and maintenance of the Philippine force, but also granted Marcos several types of military aid, much of it for use in the Philippines rather than in South Vietnam. Ultimately, Johnson's Free World Military Forces program failed. The Philippines was one of only five nations that responded to Johnson's repeated plea for military support and troops in South Vietnam.

- **Dec 12 1987 – Cold War:** Shultz calls on European allies to increase defense spending » During an official visit to Denmark, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz issues a statement calling on America's NATO allies in western Europe to sharply increase their defense spending. Shultz bluntly informed his Danish hosts that it was "important for all of us to increase our contributions to NATO, to insure that we do everything we can to preserve our values." The call for funds was in direct response to the INF Treaty that had recently been signed by the U.S. and the Soviet Union.



Shultz's visit was the first of many stops in Europe. Just days before, the Soviet Union and the United States signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty that promised to eliminate much of the two nations' nuclear arsenals in Europe. Critics of the treaty in the United States and in Western Europe argued that this would leave America's NATO allies nearly defenseless against the massive conventional forces of the Soviet Union. Shultz himself had not been a supporter of the treaty. With the treaty in force, however, the secretary now issued a call for increased spending by NATO members on their conventional armed forces. As Shultz concluded, "It's not a viewpoint. It's a description of reality." Denmark strongly supported the INF Treaty. However, the United States had criticized Denmark for years because of its small defense budget. According to one U.S. diplomat, the Danes' philosophy was that "the Soviets are not a major threat and that in any case, their British and American friends would always come to their aid."

Talks between Shultz and Danish officials were cordial, but reflected the growing tension between the United States and some of its NATO allies concerning defense issues in Europe. Instead of agreeing with the secretary's suggestion for increased defense spending, the Danish representative pushed even more to render Europe a "nuclear-free" zone. The inconclusive talks, and the Danish refusal to consider increased defense spending, were evidence of the increasing power of the "no-nuke" movement in Western Europe.

- **Dec 12 1991 – Cold War:** The Russian Federation becomes independent from the USSR.
- **Dec 12 2001 – Afghanistan:** U.S. Marine Task Force 58 secured Kandahar International Airport.

- **Dec 13 1774 – American Revolution:** Mass militiamen successfully attacked arsenal of Ft. William and Mary.
- **Dec 13 1775 – American Revolution:** The Continental Congress authorizes the building of 13 frigates.
- **Dec 13 1776 – American Revolution:** *General Charles Lee leaves his troops for Widow White's tavern* » American General Charles Lee leaves his army, riding in search of female sociability in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. Lee was an adopted tribesman through his marriage to a Mohawk woman, but his union apparently failed to quell his interest in prostitutes. Lee rode to Widow White's tavern with a minimal guard and it was there that the 16th Queen's Light Dragoons captured him on the morning of December 15. The British rejoiced at the capture of the Patriots' best-trained commander, while Washington fruitlessly negotiated for his release. Lee reported to Valley Forge upon his release in May 1778. After a series of arguments with Washington, Lee was suspended from the army in December 1778 and dismissed in 1780.



- **Dec 13 1814 – War of 1812:** General Andrew Jackson announces martial law in New Orleans, Louisiana, as British troops disembark at Lake Borne, 40 miles east of the city.
- **Dec 13 1862 – Civil War:** *Battle of Fredericksburg* » Confederate General Robert E. Lee defeats the Union Major General Ambrose E. Burnside. Casualties and losses: US 12,863 – CSA 5,377. A witness will later describe the battle to President Abraham Lincoln as a “butchery.”
- **Dec 13 1916 –WWI:** *Soldiers perish in avalanche as World War I rages* » A powerful avalanche kills hundreds of Austrian soldiers in a barracks near Italy's Mount Marmolada on this day in 1916. Over a period of several days, avalanches in the Italian Alps killed an estimated 10,000 Austrian and Italian soldiers in mid-December. The avalanches occurred as the Austrians and Italians were fighting World War I and some witnesses claim that the avalanches were purposefully caused to use as a weapon. Though there is little evidence that this was the case with these avalanches, it is possible that avalanches were used as weapons at other times during the war.

The Italians entered World War I on the side of Britain, France and Russia against Germany and Austria-Hungary in late April 1915. Over the next three years, the Italian army engaged the Austrians in a series of bloody battles in the mountainous region along the Isonzo River near the Italian-Austrian border. The conditions in the mountains were often worse than the actual fighting. An Austrian officer

once said “The mountains in winter are more dangerous than the Italians.” This was certainly true in mid-December 1916 when heavy snowfall in the Alps created conditions ripe for avalanches.

Hundreds of Austrian troops stationed in a barracks near the Gran Poz summit of Mount Marmolada were in particular danger. Although the camp was well-placed to protect it from Italian attack, it was situated directly under a mountain of unstable snow. On December 13, approximately 200,000 tons of snow, rock and ice plunged down the mountain directly onto the barracks. About 200 troops were pulled to safety, but 300 others died. Only a few of the bodies were recovered.

As the heavy snow and high winds continued over the next week, incidents like the one at Marmolada happened with disturbing frequency. Entire regiments were lost in an instant. The bodies of some victims weren’t found until spring. The best estimate is that somewhere between 9,000 and 10,000 soldiers died by the end of December 1916 because of the avalanches.

- **Dec 13 1918 –WWI:** *President Wilson makes first U.S. presidential trip to Europe* » After nine days at sea aboard the SS George Washington, Woodrow Wilson arrives at Brest, France and travels by land to Versailles. There, he headed the American delegation to the peace conference seeking a definitive end to World War I. The visit marked the first official visit by a U.S. president to Europe.



Although the president’s political opponents criticized his European visit as a sign of egotism, Wilson worked tirelessly during the proceedings to orchestrate an agreement that would encourage a lasting peace in Europe. During the stay, Wilson also led the effort for the establishment of the League of Nations, an international organization designed to seek diplomatic solutions to future conflicts.

At Versailles, Wilson’s hopes for a “just and stable peace” were opposed by the other victorious Allies, and the final treaty, which called for stiff war reparations from the former Central Powers, would be regarded with increasing bitterness in Germany in the years to come. President Woodrow Wilson was awarded the 1920 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to bring peace to Europe.

- **Dec 13 1937 – Sino*Japanese War:** *The Rape of Nanking* » During the Sino-Japanese War, Nanking, the capital of China, falls to Japanese forces, and the Chinese government flees to Hankow, further inland along the Yangtze River.

To break the spirit of Chinese resistance, Japanese General Matsui Iwane ordered that the city of Nanking be destroyed. Much of the city was burned, and Japanese troops launched a campaign of atrocities against civilians. In what became known as the “Rape of Nanking,” the Japanese butchered an estimated 150,000 male “war prisoners,” massacred an additional 50,000 male civilians, and raped at least 20,000 women and girls of all ages, many of whom were mutilated or killed in the process.

Shortly after the end of World War II, Matsui was found guilty of war crimes by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East and executed.

- **Dec 13 1940 – WW2:** Adolf Hitler issues preparations for Operation Marita, the German invasion of Greece.
- **Dec 13 1941 – WW2:** British forces launch an offensive in Libya.
- **Dec 13 1942 – WW2:** *Goebbels complains of Italians' treatment of Jews* » Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels records in his journal his contempt for the Italians' treatment of Jews in Italian-occupied territories. "The Italians are extremely lax in their treatment of Jews. They protect Italian Jews both in Tunis and in occupied France and won't permit their being drafted for work or compelled to wear the Star of David."



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." "Their destruction will go hand in hand with the destruction of our enemies." "[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." It was on his recommendation that all Jews in occupied Paris be forced to wear a yellow star on the left side of their coats or jackets in order to identify and humiliate them.

His vituperative anti-Semitism, which included blaming the war itself on the Jews in a screed published in the German magazine *Das Reich*, could not be contained within the boundaries of Germany. He expected the same of his allies. But, truth be told, in the earliest days of fascism, Mussolini had denied any truth to the idea of a "pure" race and had counted Jews among his close colleagues—and was even a Zionist!

But with Italy's failing fortunes militarily, Mussolini needed to stress the Italians' "superiority" in some sense, and so began to mimic many of the racial and anti-Jewish legislation of the Nazis. Nevertheless, Mussolini never had the stomach—or the conviction—for the extremes of Goebbels, Goering, and Hitler. And certainly the majority of the Italian people never subscribed to the growing anti-Semitic rhetoric of the regime. In fact, the Italians refused to deport Jews from Italy—or from Italian-occupied Croatia or France—to Auschwitz. The majority of Italians' courage to reject the worst of fascist

ideology—its anti-Semitism—remains one bright spot in Italy’s otherwise appalling World War II record.

- **Dec 13 1945 – WW2:** France and Britain agree to quit Syria and Lebanon.
- **Dec 13 1951 – Cold War:** *John S. Service dismissed from State Department* » Foreign Service Officer John S. Service is dismissed from the Department of State following a determination by the Civil Service Commission’s Loyalty Board that there was “reasonable doubt” concerning his loyalty to the United States.



Service was one of a number of so-called “China hands”—State Department officials who were experts on China and the Far East—who saw their careers ruined during the 1950s by Senator Joseph McCarthy and his cohorts. McCarthy targeted Service and several of his coworkers, including John Carter Vincent, O. Edmund Clubb, and John Paton Davies, for criticism and investigation. McCarthy charged that Service and other State Department officials had effectively “lost” China to the communists, either through incompetence or, more ominously, through sympathy with the communist cause. The case against Service centered on the 1945 Amerasia scandal. In that year, FBI agents raided the offices of the magazine *Amerasia* and found classified government documents concerning America’s policy in China. Service was implicated because he had given de-classified background information to the magazine’s editor.

A grand jury, a House subcommittee, and the State Department’s Loyalty Board subsequently cleared him. In 1950, however, McCarthy singled out Service as one of what he called “the 205 known communists” in the Department of State. In short order, Service’s case was reviewed once again, and this time he was dismissed. Service declared that the decision was “a surprise, a shock, and an injustice.” Senator McCarthy exclaimed, “Good, good, good!”

Service fought the dismissal, and was eventually reinstated in 1957, but his career never recovered from the damage. Like the other “China hands” who were hounded out of the State Department, Service’s real crime was his unremitting criticism of the Nationalist Chinese government of Chiang Kai-Shek during and after World War II. All believed that Chiang’s government—due to corruption, incompetence, and brutality—was doomed to fall to the communist forces in China. Thus, Service and his colleagues became easy scapegoats for Red Scare promoters such as McCarthy. Their dismissals severely damaged the Far East division of the Department of State, destroyed morale in the Foreign

Service, and effectively squashed any dissenting debate concerning America's China policy. All of these factors assisted in the serious underestimation of communist China's political investment in Korea and Vietnam and indirectly resulted in the military conflicts in those countries in the years to come.

- **Dec 13 1964 – Vietnam War:** North Vietnamese commence attack on Phuoc Long Province. Decisive North Vietnamese victory.
- **Dec 13 1972 – Vietnam War:** *Peace negotiations in Paris deadlocked* » Peace negotiations are hopelessly deadlocked after a six-hour meeting between North Vietnamese negotiator Le Duc Tho and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. After the meeting, Kissinger flew to the United States to confer with President Richard Nixon.



The main point of contention was who would have political power in South Vietnam if a cease-fire were announced. The North Vietnamese negotiators demanded the following in the case of a cease-fire: the dissolution of the government of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu, the disbanding of the South Vietnamese army, and the installation of a coalition government. The U.S. refused to consider the North Vietnamese demands and steadfastly supported Thieu and his government.

At the same time, the South Vietnamese were making their own demands. Over 100,000 North Vietnamese troops had occupied territory in South Vietnam during the 1972 Easter Offensive. Nguyen Van Thieu demanded that the North Vietnamese recognize Saigon's sovereignty over South Vietnam, which would make the continued presence of the North Vietnamese troops in the south illegal. The North Vietnamese refused Thieu's demands, saying that they would not recognize Thieu's government and would not remove their troops. They walked out of the negotiations.

Nixon issued an ultimatum to Hanoi to send its representatives back to the conference table within 72 hours "or else." When the North Vietnamese rejected Nixon's demand on December 18, the president gave the order to launch Operation Linebacker II, an intensified bombing campaign of North Vietnam that became known as the "Christmas bombing." Over the next 11 days—with the exception of Christmas Day—the bombing continued unabated, with an estimated 20,000 tons of bombs dropped over North Vietnam. On December 28, North Vietnamese officials agreed to Nixon's conditions for reopening the negotiations; the next day, the president called an end to Linebacker II.

- **Dec 13 1974 – Vietnam War:** *North Vietnamese commence attack on Phuoc Long Province* » North Vietnamese General Tran Van Tra orders 7th Division and the newly formed 3rd Division to attack Phuoc Long Province, north of Saigon.



This attack represented an escalation in the “cease-fire war” that started shortly after the Paris Peace Accords were signed in 1973. The North Vietnamese wanted to see how Saigon and Washington reacted to a major attack so close to Saigon. President Richard Nixon and his successor, Gerald Ford, had promised to come to the aid of South Vietnam if the North Vietnamese launched a major attack. With Nixon’s resignation and Ford facing an increasingly hostile Congress, Hanoi was essentially conducting a “test” attack to see if the U.S. would honor its commitment to Saigon. The attack was much more successful than the North Vietnamese anticipated: the South Vietnamese soldiers fought poorly and the U.S. did nothing.

The communists overran the last South Vietnamese positions in Phuoc Long on January 6, 1975. Emboldened by their success and by the American passivity, the North Vietnamese leadership decided that it was time to launch a major offensive. The next attack was launched in March, with Ban Me Thuot in the Central Highlands as the initial objective. Once again, the South Vietnamese forces were largely ineffective and the U.S. failed to respond. When the North Vietnamese intensified their efforts, the South Vietnamese, feeling abandoned by the United States, collapsed totally in just 55 days. On April 30, 1975, the North Vietnamese tanks crashed through the gates of the presidential palace and the South Vietnamese surrendered unconditionally.

- **Dec 13 2003 – Post Gulf War:** *Saddam Hussein captured* » After spending nine months on the run, former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein is captured on this day in 2003. Saddam’s downfall began on March 20, 2003, when the United States led an invasion force into Iraq to topple his government, which had controlled the country for more than 20 years.

Saddam Hussein was born into a poor family in Tikrit, 100 miles outside of Baghdad, in 1937. After moving to Baghdad as a teenager, Saddam joined the now-infamous Baath party, which he would later lead. He participated in several coup attempts, finally helping to install his cousin as dictator of Iraq in July 1968. Saddam took over for his cousin 11 years later. During his 24 years in office, Saddam’s secret police, charged with protecting his power, terrorized the public, ignoring the human rights of the nation’s citizens. While many of his people faced poverty, he lived in incredible luxury, building more than 20 lavish palaces throughout the country. Obsessed with security, he is said to have moved among them often, always sleeping in secret locations.

In the early 1980s, Saddam involved his country in an eight-year war with Iran, which is estimated to have taken more than a million lives on both sides. He is alleged to have used nerve agents and mustard gas on Iranian soldiers during the conflict, as well as chemical weapons on Iraq’s own Kurdish population in northern Iraq in 1988. After he invaded Kuwait in 1990, a U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq

in 1991, forcing the dictator's army to leave its smaller neighbor, but failing to remove Saddam from power. Throughout the 1990s, Saddam faced both U.N. economic sanctions and air strikes aimed at crippling his ability to produce chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. With Iraq continuing to face allegations of illegal oil sales and weapons-building, the United States again invaded the country in March 2003, this time with the expressed purpose of ousting Saddam and his regime.

Despite proclaiming in early March 2003 that, "it is without doubt that the faithful will be victorious against aggression," Saddam went into hiding soon after the American invasion, speaking to his people only through an occasional audiotape, and his government soon fell. After declaring Saddam the most important of a list of his regime's 55 most-wanted members, the United States began an intense search for the former leader and his closest advisors. On July 22, 2003, Saddam's sons, Uday and Qusay, who many believe he was grooming to one day fill his shoes, were killed when U.S. soldiers raided a villa in which they were staying in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.



Five months later, on December 13, 2003, U.S. soldiers found Saddam Hussein hiding in a six-to-eight-foot deep hole, nine miles outside his hometown of Tikrit. The man once obsessed with hygiene was found to be unkempt, with a bushy beard and matted hair. He did not resist and was uninjured during the arrest. A soldier at the scene described him as "a man resigned to his fate."

Saddam is now in Iraqi custody with U.S. security and faces trial in front of a special tribunal on several criminal cases pending against him. The first began in October 2005. On November 5 of the next year, he was found guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced to death by hanging. After an unsuccessful appeal, he was executed on December 30, 2006. Despite a prolonged search, weapons of mass destruction were never found in Iraq.

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- **Dec 14 1777 – American Revolution:** *Thomas Conway is named inspector general* » The Continental Congress names Irish-born Thomas Conway to the post of inspector general of the United States. Conway, who was born in Ireland but raised in France, entered the French army in 1749. He was recruited to the Patriot cause by Silas Deane, the American ambassador to France, and after meeting with General George Washington at Morristown in May 1777, he was appointed brigadier general and assigned to Major General John Sullivan's division.



Thomas Conway

Conway served admirably under Sullivan at the battles of Brandywine in September 1777 and Germantown in October 1777 before becoming involved in an unconfirmed conspiracy to remove General Washington from command of the Continental Army. The rumored conspiracy would go down in history as the Conway Cabal.

Just a few months after receiving a glowing recommendation from General Washington, Conway rose in power and influence to major general and then inspector general. After several defeats in the fall of 1777, some members of Congress expressed displeasure with the leadership of General Washington and Conway began writing letters to prominent leaders, including General Horatio Gates, that were critical of Washington.

After Washington got word of Conway's letter to General Gates, he responded with a letter to Congress in January 1778. Embarrassed, Conway offered his resignation in March 1778 by way of apology, and was surprised and humiliated when Congress accepted. After General John Cadwalader wounded him in a duel defending Washington's honor, Conway returned to France, where he died in exile in 1800.

- **Dec 14 1799 – George Washington:** *George Washington dies* » The American revolutionary leader and first president of the United States, dies of acute laryngitis at his estate in Mount Vernon, Virginia. He was 67 years old. Washington was born in 1732 to a farm family in Westmoreland County, Virginia. His first direct military experience came as a lieutenant colonel in the Virginia colonial militia in 1754, when he led a small expedition against the French in the Ohio River valley on behalf of the governor of Virginia. Two years later, Washington took command of the defenses of the western Virginian frontier during the French and Indian War. After the war's fighting moved elsewhere, he resigned from his military post, returned to a planter's life, and took a seat in Virginia's House of Burgesses.

During the next two decades, Washington openly opposed the escalating British taxation and repression of the American colonies. In 1774, he represented Virginia at the Continental Congress. After the American Revolution erupted in 1775, Washington was nominated to be commander in chief of the newly established Continental Army. Some in the Continental Congress opposed his appointment, thinking other candidates were better equipped for the post, but he was ultimately chosen because as a Virginian his leadership helped bind the Southern colonies more closely to the rebellion in New England.

With his inexperienced and poorly equipped army of civilian soldiers, General Washington led an effective war of harassment against British forces in America while encouraging the intervention of the French into the conflict on behalf of the colonists. On October 19, 1781, with the surrender of British General Charles Lord Cornwallis' massive British army at Yorktown, Virginia, General Washington had defeated one of the most powerful nations on earth.

After the war, the victorious general retired to his estate at Mount Vernon, but in 1787 he heeded his nation's call and returned to politics to preside over the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The drafters created the office of president with him in mind, and in February 1789 Washington was unanimously elected the first president of the United States.

As president, Washington sought to unite the nation and protect the interests of the new republic at home and abroad. Of his presidency, he said, "I walk on untrodden ground. There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn in precedent." He successfully implemented executive authority, making good use of brilliant politicians such as Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson in his cabinet, and quieted fears of presidential tyranny. In 1792, he was unanimously reelected but four years later refused a third term.

In 1797, he finally began a long-awaited retirement at his estate in Virginia. He died two years later. His friend Henry Lee provided a famous eulogy for the father of the United States: "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

- **Dec 14 1814 – War of 1812:** The Royal Navy seizes control of Lake Borgne, Louisiana.
- **Dec 14 1862 – Civil War:** *Battle of Kinston ends* » A Union expedition under Brig. Gen. John G. Foster left New Bern, North Carolina to disrupt the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad at Goldsborough. Foster led a force of about 10,000 infantry, 640 cavalry, and 40 pieces of artillery. The defending Confederates numbered about 2,014 and were commanded by Brig. Gen. Nathan G. "Shank" Evans, who won fame at the First Battle of Manassas (Bull Run). They would be the first major Confederate opposition to Foster's advance to Goldsboro.

On 12 Dec. 1862, as his column approached Kinston from New Bern, Foster sent a small party of cavalry on a feint down the main road into Kinston. Meanwhile, the main body detoured to the south and west, intending to attack the town from the southwest, an unanticipated direction. At midmorning on 13 December, the Union army reached Southwest Creek, a small tributary of the Neuse River. Two regiments forced a crossing of the creek, driving back the North Carolina regiment holding the position. When Evans arrived, he withdrew all of his forces to a defensive line two miles from the bridge crossing the Neuse at Kinston and held this strong natural position overnight.

The Union attack resumed at 9:00 a.m. the next day. The inexperienced Federals faced both stiff Confederate resistance and casualties inflicted by their own artillery. Nevertheless, they crossed the swamp in front of the Confederate position and turned its left flank, sending that portion of the troops retreating north across the bridge. Evans, who thought that all of his men were safely across, ordered the bridge burned and turned his artillery on the troops remaining on the right and center of what had been the Confederate line. Shelled by the enemy and their own commander, the remaining Confederate troops made for the bridge. Closely pursued by the Federal advance, the organized retreat fell apart when the men approached the burning span.

Nearly 400 of Evans's command were captured in the race for the burning bridge. Confederates north of the river retreated to establish a position two miles beyond Kinston. Foster's men extinguished the flames on the bridge and crossed on the partially destroyed span. Once across the river, Foster entered Kinston and sent a request for Evans's surrender, which was curtly refused. Before Foster could reform his units for another attack, the Confederate commander withdrew once more. The Union forces camped near Kinston that night and recrossed the river the following morning to resume their advance. Foster had lost about 160 killed and wounded in the fight. Confederate casualties were 125 killed and wounded and 400 captured, and Kinston was thoroughly looted by the Federal troops.

- **Dec 14 1863 – Civil War:** *Lincoln pardons his sister-in-law* » President Abraham Lincoln announces a grant of amnesty for Emilie Todd Helm, his wife Mary Lincoln's half-sister and the widow of a Confederate general. The pardon was one of the first under Lincoln's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, which he had announced less than a week before. The plan was the president's blueprint for the reintegration of the South into the Union. Part of the plan allowed for former Confederates to be granted amnesty if they took an oath to the United States. The option was open to all but the highest officials of the Confederacy.



Emilie Todd Helm was the wife of Benjamin Helm, who, like the Lincolns, was a Kentucky native. The president was said to be an admirer of Helm, a West Point and Harvard graduate. Lincoln had offered Helm a position in the U.S. Army, but Helm opted to join the Confederates instead. Helm led a group of Kentuckians known as the Orphan Brigade, since they could not return to their Union-held native state during the war. Helm was killed at the Battle of Chickamauga in September 1863.

After her husband's death, Helm made her way through Union lines to Washington, D.C. She stayed in the White House and the Lincolns tried to keep her visit a secret. General Daniel Sickles, who had been wounded at the Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, five months prior, told Lincoln that he should not have a Rebel in his house. Lincoln replied, "General Sickles, my wife and I are in the habit of choosing our own guests. We do not need from our friends either advice or assistance in the matter." After Lincoln granted her pardon, Emilie Helm returned to Kentucky.

- **Dec 14 1863 – Civil War:** Confederate General James Longstreet attacks Union troops at Bean's Station, Tenn.
- **Dec 14 1906 – Pre WWI:** The first U1 submarine is brought into service in Germany.

- **Dec 14 1939 – WW2:** *USSR expelled from the League of Nations* » The League of Nations, the international peacekeeping organization formed at the end of World War I, expels the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in response to the Soviets' invasion of Finland on 30 OCT.

Although the League of Nations was more or less the brainchild of President Woodrow Wilson, the United States, which was to have sat on the Executive Council, never joined. Isolationists in the Senate—put off by America's intervention in World War I, which they felt was more of a European civil war than a true world war—prevented American participation. While the League was born with the exalted mission of preventing another “Great War,” it proved ineffectual, being unable to protect China from a Japanese invasion or Ethiopia from an Italian one. The League was also useless in reacting to German remilitarization, which was a violation of the Treaty of Versailles, the document that formally set the peace terms for the end of World War I.

Germany and Japan voluntarily withdrew from the League in 1933, and Italy left in 1937. The true imperial designs of the Soviet Union soon became apparent with its occupation of eastern Poland in September of 1939, ostensibly with the intention of protecting Russian “blood brothers,” Ukrainians and Byelorussians, who were supposedly menaced by the Poles. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were then terrorized into signing “mutual assistance” pacts, primarily one-sided agreements that gave the USSR air and naval bases in those countries. But the invasion of Finland, where no provocation or pact could credibly be adduced to justify the aggression, resulted in worldwide reaction. President Roosevelt, although an “ally” of the USSR, condemned the invasion, causing the Soviets to withdraw from the New York World's Fair. And finally, the League of Nations, drawing almost its last breath, expelled it.

- **Dec 14 1941 – WW2:** German Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel orders the construction of defensive positions along the European coastline.
- **Dec 14 1941 – WW2:** Wake Island defenders were left with one aircraft surviving Japanese attacks.
- **Dec 14 1946 – Post WW2:** The United Nations adopt a disarmament resolution prohibiting the A-Bomb.
- **Dec 14 1960 – Cold War:** A U.S. Boeing B-52 bomber sets a 10,000-mile non-stop record without refueling.
- **Dec 14 1961 – Vietnam War:** *Kennedy announces intent to increase aid to South Vietnam* » In a public exchange of letters with South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, President John F. Kennedy formally announces that the United States will increase aid to South Vietnam, which would include the expansion of the U.S. troop commitment. Kennedy, concerned with the recent advances made by the communist insurgency movement in South Vietnam wrote, “We shall promptly increase our assistance to your defense effort.”

Kennedy's chief military adviser, Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, and Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Walt W. Rostow had just returned from a fact-finding trip to Saigon and urged the president to increase U.S. economic and military advisory support to Diem. The military support was

to include intensive training of local self-defense troops by American military advisers. Additionally, Taylor and Rostow advocated a significant increase in airplanes, helicopters, and support personnel. In a secret appendix to their report, Taylor and Rostow recommended the deployment of 8,000 American combat troops, which could be used to support the South Vietnamese forces in combat operations against the insurgents. To overcome Diem's resistance to foreign troops—which he saw as a potential Viet Cong propaganda windfall—Taylor and Rostow suggested that the forces were to be called a “flood control team.” Kennedy, who wanted to stop the communists but also wanted to be cautious about the degree of involvement, accepted most of the recommendations, but did not commit U.S. combat troops.



In return for the support, Kennedy requested that Diem liberalize his regime and institute land reform and other measures to win the support of his people. Diem initially refused, but consented when he was threatened with a reduction in the promised aid. In the long run, however, his reforms did not go far enough and the increased American aid proved insufficient in stemming the tide of the insurgency. Diem was murdered during a coup by his own generals in November 1963. Shortly thereafter, Kennedy was assassinated. At the time of his death, there were more than 16,000 U.S. advisers in South Vietnam. Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, rapidly escalated the war, which resulted in the commitment of U.S. ground forces and eventually more than 500,000 American troops in Vietnam.

- **Dec 14 1964 – Vietnam War: *Operation Barrel Roll begins*** » In Laos, Operation Barrel Roll, the name given to the first phase of the bombing plan approved by President Lyndon B. Johnson on December 1, begins with U.S. planes attacking “targets of opportunity” in northern Laos.



Gen. Vang Pao in 1961

This operation was initiated in response to a Pathet Lao offensive in the Plaine des Jarres in north central Laos. The Pathet Lao were communist guerrillas who were fighting to overthrow the Royal Lao government. Operation Barrel Roll was designed to provide air support for the Royal Laotian Army and CIA-trained Hmong (mountain people) irregular forces led by Gen. Vang Pao. In addition to these operations, there was also another part of the war in Laos which was conducted in the eastern part of the country along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which ran out of North Vietnam through Laos and south along the South Vietnamese-Cambodian border. The North Vietnamese used this trail network as the main avenue by which they supplied and reinforced their troops in South Vietnam.

Operations Steel Tiger and Tiger Hound were initiated in April and December 1965 respectively to bomb the trail in an intensive and protracted attempt to interdict the massive amounts of men and supplies moving along the corridor. By 1973, when Operations Barrel Roll, Steel Tiger, and Tiger Hound were terminated, Laos had become the most heavily bombed country in the world. During these operations, allied aircraft dropped more than 3 million tons of bombs, three times the amount dropped on North Vietnam. U.S. spending for these bombing campaigns was 10 times that of the Laotian national budget.

- **Dec 14 1980 – Cold War:** NATO warns the Soviets to stay out of the internal affairs of Poland, saying that intervention would effectively destroy the détente between the East and the West.
- **Dec 14 1980 – Cold War:** *CIA issues warning about Soviet arms sales to Third World nations* » A CIA report claims that the Soviet Union delivered nearly \$7 billion worth of military assistance to Third World nations in 1979, and made over \$8 billion in arms sales during that same year. The study also noted that there were nearly 51,000 communist military advisors in Third World countries. The report indicated that the arms sales increased instability and chances for military conflict.

The CIA study portrayed an alarming growth in Soviet military assistance to the Third World, particularly to nations in the Middle East and Africa. According to the report, Syria, Iraq, and South Yemen were the primary recipients of aid to the Middle East while Angola and Ethiopia received most of the arms sold to Africa. Much of this assistance was in the form of sophisticated weapons such as MiG fighter-bombers and surface-to-air missiles. Almost two-thirds of the military advisors were Cubans whom Fidel Castro assigned to Angola. Despite this massive effort, the study concluded that, “Moscow has recruited few adherents to its ideology.” Nevertheless, the economic advantages were significant. Together with an expanded program of economic assistance, Soviet arms sales to the Third World helped open markets and provide hard currency for the Russian economy. Soviet trade with the Third World increased from just over \$250 million in 1955 to over \$13 billion in 1978. In addition, the Soviets were able to obtain sources for natural gas (Afghanistan), oil (Iraq and Syria), and aluminum (Turkey).

The report ended on an ominous note, suggesting that Soviet arms sales to the Third World—particularly to the Middle East—were dangerously increasing instability and the chances for war. The report failed to investigate the impact of the \$6 billion in arms sales the US made to the Third World.

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- **Dec 15 1791 – Post American Revolution:** Virginia becomes the last state to ratify the Bill of Rights, making the first ten amendments to the Constitution law and completing the revolutionary reforms begun by the Declaration of Independence.
- **Dec 15 1864 – Civil War: *Battle of Nashville, Tennessee*** » The once powerful Confederate Army of Tennessee is nearly destroyed when a Union army commanded by General George Thomas swarms over the Rebel trenches around Nashville.



The Battle of Nashville was the finale in a disastrous year for General John Bell Hood's Confederates. The Rebels lost a long summer campaign for Atlanta in September 1864 when Hood abandoned the city to the army of William T. Sherman. Hood then took his diminished force north into Tennessee. He hoped to draw Sherman out of the Deep South, but Sherman had enough troops to split his force and send part of it to chase Hood into Tennessee. In November, Sherman took the remainder of his army on his march across Georgia. On 30 NOV, Hood attacked the troops of General John Schofield at Franklin, Tennessee. The Confederates suffered heavy casualties and much of the army's leadership structure was destroyed: Twelve generals were killed or wounded along with 60 regimental leaders. When Schofield moved north to Nashville to join Thomas, Hood followed him and dug his army in outside of Nashville's formidable defenses.

Thomas saw his chance to deal a decisive blow to Hood. More than 50,000 Yankees faced a Rebel force that now totaled less than 20,000. Historians have long questioned why Hood even approached the strongly fortified city with the odds so stacked against him. Early in the morning of 15 DEC, Thomas sent a force under General James Steedman against the Confederates' right flank. The Union troops overran the Confederate trenches and drove the Rebels back more than a mile. The short December day halted the fighting, but Thomas struck again on 16 DEC. This time, the entire Confederate line gave way and sent Hood's men from the field in a total rout. Only General Stephen Lee's valiant rear-guard action prevented complete destruction of the Confederate army.

More than 6,000 Rebels were killed or wounded and 3,000 Yankees lost their lives. Hood and his damaged army retreated to Mississippi, the Army of Tennessee no longer a viable offensive fighting force.

- **Dec 15 1915 – WWI:** Allied forces begin a full retreat from the shores of the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey, ending a disastrous invasion of the Ottoman Empire. The Gallipoli campaign resulted in 250,000 Allied casualties and a greatly discredited Allied military command.

- **Dec 15 1942 – WW2:** The Battle of Mount Austen, the Galloping Horse, and the Sea Horse begins during the Guadalcanal campaign. Casualties and losses: US Est. 250 – Japan Est. 2,700 to 3,300.
- **Dec 15 1945 – Post WW2:** MacArthur orders end of Shinto as Japanese state religion » In his capacity as Supreme Commander of Allied Powers in the Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur, brings an end to Shintoism as Japan's established religion. The Shinto system included the belief that the emperor, in this case Hirohito, was divine.

On September 2, 1945 aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, MacArthur signed the instrument of Japanese surrender on behalf of the victorious Allies. Before the economic and political reforms the Allies devised for Japan's future could be enacted, however, the country had to be demilitarized. Step one in the plan to reform Japan entailed the demobilization of Japan's armed forces, and the return of all troops from abroad. Japan had had a long history of its foreign policy being dominated by the military, as evidenced by Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoye's failed attempts to reform his government and being virtually pushed out of power by career army officer Hideki Tojo.



Step two was the dismantling of Shintoism as the Japanese national religion. Allied powers believed that serious democratic reforms, and a constitutional form of government, could not be put into place as long as the Japanese people looked to an emperor as their ultimate authority. Hirohito was forced to renounce his divine status, and his powers were severely limited—he was reduced to little more than a figurehead. And not merely religion, but even compulsory courses on ethics—the power to influence the Japanese population's traditional religious and moral duties—were wrenched from state control as part of a larger decentralization of all power.

- **Dec 15 1961 – Israel:** Architect of the Holocaust sentenced to die » In Tel Aviv, Israel, Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi SS officer who organized Adolf Hitler's "final solution of the Jewish question," is condemned to death by an Israeli war crimes tribunal.

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 located Eichmann 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 20 MAY, 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.

- **Dec 15 1965 – Vietnam War:** *U.S. bombers strike industrial targets in North Vietnam* » In the first raid on a major North Vietnamese industrial target, U.S. Air Force planes destroy a thermal power plant at Uong Bi, 14 miles north of Haiphong. The plant reportedly supplied about 15 percent of North Vietnam’s total electric power production.
- **Dec 15 1969 – Vietnam War:** *Nixon announces additional U.S. troop withdrawals* » The President announces that 50,000 additional U.S. troops will be pulled out of South Vietnam by April 15, 1970. This was the third reduction since the June Midway conference, when Nixon announced his Vietnamization program.

Under the Vietnamization program, the South Vietnamese forces would receive intensified training and new equipment so they could gradually assume overall responsibility for the war. Concurrent with this effort, Nixon announced that he would begin to bring U.S. troops home. This third increment would bring the total reductions to 115,000. By January 1972, there were only around 70,000 U.S. troops left in South Vietnam.

Noting the steady withdrawal of American forces, the North Vietnamese decided to launch a massive invasion of South Vietnam in March 1972. The South Vietnamese forces, supported by American advisers and U.S. airpower, reeled under the onslaught but ultimately prevailed, holding on despite overwhelming odds. After much posturing and many lengthy negotiations (with additional “motivation” contributed by Nixon’s bombing of North Vietnam in December 1972), National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and his North Vietnamese counterpart, Le Duc Tho, hammered out a peace agreement. A cease-fire went into effect on January 27, 1973.

The war was over for the United States, but fighting soon resumed between North and South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese held out for nearly two years, but succumbed when the United States cut off all military support. When the North Vietnamese launched a new offensive in March 1975, South Vietnam fell in just 55 days.

- **Dec 15 1978 – Cold War:** *United States announces that it will recognize communist China* » In one of the most dramatic announcements of the Cold War, President Jimmy Carter states that as of January 1, 1979, the United States will formally recognize the communist People’s Republic of China (PRC) and sever relations with Taiwan.



Following Mao Zedong’s successful revolution in China in 1949, the United States steadfastly refused to recognize the new communist regime. Instead, America continued to recognize and supply

the Nationalist Chinese government that had been established by Chiang Kai-shek on the island of Taiwan. In 1950, during the Korean War, U.S. and PRC armed forces clashed. During the 1960s, the United States was angered by PRC support and aid to North Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

By the 1970s, however, a new set of circumstances existed. From the U.S. viewpoint, closer relations with the PRC would bring economic and political benefits. Economically, American businessmen were eager to try and exploit the huge Chinese market. Politically, U.S. policymakers believed that they could play the “China card”—using closer diplomatic relations with the PRC to pressure the Soviets into becoming more malleable on a variety of issues, including arms agreements. The PRC also had come to desire better relations with its old enemy. It sought the large increase in trade with the United States that would result from normalized relations, and particularly looked forward to the technology it might obtain from America. The PRC was also looking for allies. A military showdown with its former ally, Vietnam, was in the making and Vietnam had a mutual support treaty with the Soviets.

Carter’s announcement that diplomatic ties would be severed with Taiwan (which the PRC insisted on) angered many in Congress. The Taiwan Relations Act was quickly passed in retaliation. It gave Taiwan nearly the same status as any other nation recognized by the United States and also mandated that arms sales continue to the Nationalist government. In place of the U.S. embassy in Taiwan, an “unofficial” representative, called the American Institute in Taiwan, would continue to serve U.S. interests in the country.

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