Military History Anniversaries 01 thru 14 Feb

Events in History over the next 14 day period that had U.S. military involvement or impacted in some way on U.S military operations or American interests

- **Feb 01 1781 – American Revolution:** Davidson College namesake killed at Cowan’s Ford » American Brigadier General William Lee Davidson dies in combat attempting to prevent General Charles Cornwallis’ army from crossing the Catawba River in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

  Davidson’s North Carolina militia, numbering between 600 and 800 men, set up camp on the far side of the river, hoping to thwart or at least slow Cornwallis’ crossing. The Patriots stayed back from the banks of the river in order to prevent Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton’s forces from fording the river at a different point and surprising the Patriots with a rear attack.

  At 1 a.m., Cornwallis began to move his troops toward the ford; by daybreak, they were crossing in a double-pronged formation—one prong for horses, the other for wagons. The noise of the rough crossing, during which the horses were forced to plunge in over their heads in the storm-swollen stream, woke the sleeping Patriot guard. The Patriots fired upon the Britons as they crossed and received heavy fire in return. Almost immediately upon his arrival at the river bank, General Davidson took a rifle ball to the heart and fell from his horse; his soaked corpse was found late that evening. Although Cornwallis’ troops took heavy casualties, the combat did little to slow their progress north toward Virginia.

  General Davidson was the son of Ulster-Scot Presbyterian immigrants to Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The family moved in 1748, two years after William’s birth, to what was then known as Rowan (now Iredell) County, North Carolina. In 1835, Davidson’s son, William Lee Davidson II, gave the Concord Presbytery land on which to build a college in his father’s honor. The school was named Davidson College.

- **Feb 01 1861 – Civil War:** Texas secedes » Texas becomes the seventh state to secede from the Union when a state convention votes 166 to 8 in favor of the measure. The Texans who voted to leave
the Union did so over the objections of their governor, Sam Houston. A staunch Unionist, Houston’s election in 1859 as governor seemed to indicate that Texas did not share the rising secessionist sentiments of the other Southern states.

However, events swayed many Texans to the secessionist cause. John Brown’s raid on the federal armory at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia), in October 1859 had raised the specter of a major slave insurrection, and the ascendant Republican Party made many Texans uneasy about continuing in the Union. After Abraham Lincoln’s election to the presidency in November 1860, pressure mounted on Houston to call a convention so that Texas could consider secession. He did so reluctantly in January 1861, and sat in silence on 1 FEB as the convention voted overwhelmingly in favor of secession. Houston grumbled that Texans were “stilling the voice of reason,” and he predicted an “ignoble defeat” for the South. Houston refused to take an oath of allegiance to the Confederacy and was replaced in March 1861 by his lieutenant governor.

Texas’ move completed the first round of secession. Seven states—South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas—left the Union before Lincoln took office. Four more states—Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas—waited until the formal start of the Civil War, with the April 1861 firing on Fort Sumter at Charleston, South Carolina, before deciding to leave the Union. The remaining slave states—Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri—never mustered the necessary majority for secession.

- **Feb 01 1909** – Cuba: U.S. troops leave Cuba after installing Jose Miguel Gomez as president.

- **Feb 01 1917** – WWI: *Germany resumes unrestricted submarine warfare* » The lethal threat of the German U-boat submarine raises its head again, as Germany returns to the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare it had previously suspended in response to pressure from the United States and other neutral countries.

  Unrestricted submarine warfare was first introduced in World War I in early 1915, when Germany declared the area around the British Isles a war zone, in which all merchant ships, including those from neutral countries, would be attacked by the German navy. A string of attacks on merchant ships followed, culminating in the sinking of the British ship Lusitania by a German U-boat on May 7, 1915. Although the Lusitania was a British ship and it was carrying a supply of munitions—Germany used these two facts to justify the attack—it was principally a passenger ship, and the 1,201 people who drowned in its sinking included 128 Americans. The incident prompted U.S. President Woodrow Wilson to send a strongly worded note to the German government demanding an end to German attacks against unarmed merchant ships. By September 1915, the German government had imposed
such strict constraints on the operation of the nation’s submarines that the German navy was persuaded to suspend U-boat warfare altogether.

German navy commanders, however, were ultimately not prepared to accept this degree of passivity, and continued to push for a more aggressive use of the submarine, convincing first the army and eventually the government, most importantly Kaiser Wilhelm, that the U-boat was an essential component of German war strategy. Planning to remain on the defensive on the Western Front in 1917, the supreme army command endorsed the navy’s opinion that unrestricted U-boat warfare against the British at sea could result in a German victory by the fall of 1917. In a joint audience with the Kaiser on January 8, 1917, army and naval leaders presented their arguments to Wilhelm, who supported them in spite of the opposition of the German chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, who was not at the meeting. Though he feared antagonizing the U.S., Hollweg accepted the Kaiser’s decision, pressured as he was by the armed forces and the hungry and frustrated German public, which was angered by the continuing Allied naval blockade and which supported aggressive action towards Germany’s enemies.

On January 31, 1917, Bethmann Hollweg went before the German Reichstag government and made the announcement that unrestricted submarine warfare would resume the next day, 1 FEB. The destructive designs of our opponents cannot be expressed more strongly. We have been challenged to fight to the end. We accept the challenge. We stake everything, and we shall be victorious.

- **Feb 01 1942 – WW2:** U.S. Navy conducts Marshalls–Gilberts raids, the first offensive action by the United States against Japanese forces in the Pacific Theater.

- **Feb 01 1943 – WW2:** Japanese forces on Guadalcanal Island, defeated by Marines, start to withdraw after the Japanese emperor finally gives them permission.

- **Feb 01 1945 – WW2:** U.S. Rangers and Filipino guerrillas rescue 513 American survivors of the Bataan Death March.

- **Feb 01 1951 – Cold War:** *U.N. condemns PRC for aggression*  » By a vote of 44 to 7, the United Nations General Assembly passes a resolution condemning the communist government of the People’s Republic of China for acts of aggression in Korea. It was the first time since the United Nations formed in 1945 that it had condemned a nation as an aggressor.

In June 1950, communist forces from North Korea invaded South Korea in an attempt to unify the nation, which had been divided in 1945 when Soviet troops occupied the northern portion of the country and U.S. troops the southern in order to accept the surrender of Japanese forces in Korea. In late 1950, hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops crossed into North Korea to do battle with U.S. forces, which had earlier driven the invading North Korean forces out of South Korea. By 1951, the
United States was deeply involved in Korea, having committed thousands of troops and millions of dollars in aid to South Korea.

The General Assembly vote followed unsuccessful attempts by the U.S. delegation to the United Nations to have the Security Council take action against the Chinese. Exercising his nation’s veto power, the Soviet representative on the Security Council consistently blocked the U.S. effort. (The United States, France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and Nationalist China had absolute veto power of any Security Council proposal.) Turning to the General Assembly, the U.S. delegation called for the United Nations to condemn communist China as an aggressor in Korea. The final vote fell largely along ideological lines, with the communist bloc nations of the Soviet Union, Byelorussia, Ukraine, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, joined by neutralists Burma and India, voting against the resolution. Despite the votes against it, the resolution passed, declaring that China was “engaged in aggression in Korea,” and asked that it “cause its forces and nationals in Korea to cease hostilities against the United Nations forces and to withdraw from Korea.”

The action was largely symbolic, because many nations-including some that voted for the resolution-were reluctant to take more forceful action against the People’s Republic of China for fear that the conflict in Korea would escalate. While economic and political sanctions could have been brought against China, the United Nations decided to take no further action. The Korean War dragged on for two more bloody years, finally ending in a stalemate and cease-fire in 1953. By that time, over 50,000 U.S. troops had died in the conflict.

- **Feb 01 1964 – Vietnam War: Operation Plan 34A commences** » U.S. and South Vietnamese naval forces initiate Operation Plan (Oplan) 34A, which calls for raids by South Vietnamese commandos, operating under American orders, against North Vietnamese coastal and island installations.

Although American forces were not directly involved in the actual raids, U.S. Navy ships were on station to conduct electronic surveillance and monitor North Vietnamese defense responses under another program called Operation De Soto. The Oplan 34A attacks played a major role in events that led to what became known as the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. On August 2, 1964, North Vietnamese patrol boats, responding to an Oplan 34A attack by South Vietnamese gunboats against the North Vietnamese island of Hon Me, attacked the destroyer USS Maddox which was conducting a De Soto mission in the area. Two days after the first attack, there was another incident that still remains unclear. The Maddox, joined by destroyer USS C. Turner Joy, engaged what were thought at the time to be more attacking North Vietnamese patrol boats.

Although it was questionable whether the second attack actually happened, the incident provided the rationale for retaliatory air attacks against the North Vietnamese and the subsequent Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which became the basis for the initial escalation of the war in Vietnam, and ultimately the insertion of U.S. combat troops into the area.

- **Feb 01 1968 – Vietnam War: U.S. troops drive the North Vietnamese out of Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon.**

- **Feb 01 1968 – Vietnam War: The execution of Viet Cong officer Nguyen Van Lem by South Vietnamese National Police Chief Nguyen Ngoc Loan is videotaped and photographed by Eddie Adams. This image helped build opposition to the Vietnam War.**
Feb 01 1979 – Iran: Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran » The Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran in triumph after 15 years of exile. The shah and his family had fled the country two weeks before, and jubilant Iranian revolutionaries were eager to establish a fundamentalist Islamic government under Khomeini’s leadership.

Born around the turn of the century, Ruhollah Khomeini was the son of an Islamic religious scholar and in his youth memorized the Qur’an. He was a Shiite—the branch of Islam practiced by a majority of Iranians—and soon devoted himself to the formal study of Shia Islam in the city of Qom. A devout cleric, he rose steadily in the informal Shiite hierarchy and attracted many disciples.

In 1941, British and Soviet troops occupied Iran and installed Mohammad Reza Pahlavi as the second modern shah of Iran. The new shah had close ties with the West, and in 1953 British and U.S. intelligence agents helped him overthrow a popular political rival. Mohammad Reza embraced many Western ideas and in 1963 launched his “White Revolution,” a broad government program that called for the reduction of religious estates in the name of land redistribution, equal rights for women, and other modern reforms. Khomeini, now known by the high Shiite title “ayatollah,” was the first religious leader to openly condemn the shah’s program of westernization. In fiery dispatches from his Faziyeh Seminary in Qom, Khomeini called for the overthrow of the shah and the establishment of an Islamic state. In 1963, Mohammad Reza imprisoned him, which led to riots, and on November 4, 1964, expelled him from Iran.

Khomeini settled in An Najaf, a Shiite holy city across the border in Iraq, and sent home recordings of his sermons that continued to incite his student followers. Breaking precedence with the Shiite tradition that discouraged clerical participation in government, he called for Shiite leaders to govern Iran.

In the 1970s, Mohammad Reza further enraged Islamic fundamentalists in Iran by holding an extravagant celebration of the 2,500th anniversary of the pre-Islamic Persian monarchy and replaced the Islamic calendar with a Persian calendar. As discontent grew, the shah became more repressive, and support for Khomeini grew. In 1978, massive anti-shah demonstrations broke out in Iran’s major cities. Dissatisfied members of the lower and middle classes joined the radical students, and
Khomeini called for the shah’s immediate overthrow. In December, the army mutinied, and on January 16, 1979, the shah fled.

Khomeini arrived in Tehran in triumph on February 1, 1979, and was acclaimed as the leader of the Iranian Revolution. With religious fervor running high, he consolidated his authority and set out to transform Iran into a religious state. On November 4, 1979, the 15th anniversary of his exile, students stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took the staff hostage. With Khomeini’s approval, the radicals demanded the return of the shah to Iran and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. The shah died in Egypt of cancer in July 1980.

In December 1979, a new Iranian constitution was approved, naming Khomeini as Iran’s political and religious leader for life. Under his rule, Iranian women were denied equal rights and required to wear a veil, Western culture was banned, and traditional Islamic law and its often-brutal punishments were reinstated. In suppressing opposition, Khomeini proved as ruthless as the shah, and thousands of political dissidents were executed during his decade of rule. In 1980, Iraq invaded Iran’s oil-producing province of Khuzestan. After initial advances, the Iraqi offense was repulsed. In 1982, Iraq voluntarily withdrew and sought a peace agreement, but Khomeini renewed fighting. Stalemates and the deaths of thousands of young Iranian conscripts in Iraq followed. In 1988, Khomeini finally agreed to a U.N.-brokered cease-fire.

After the Ayatollah Khomeini died on June 3, 1989, more than two million anguished mourners attended his funeral. Gradual democratization began in Iran in early the 1990s, culminating in a free election in 1997 in which the moderate reformist Mohammed Khatami was elected president.

- **Feb 01 1998 – U.S. Navy:** Rear Admiral Lillian E. Fishburne becomes the first female African American to be promoted to rear admiral.

- **Feb 01 1998 – Aviation:** *Columbia mission ends in disaster* » The space shuttle Columbia breaks up while entering the atmosphere over Texas, killing all seven crew members on board.

The Columbia’s 28th space mission, designated STS-107, was originally scheduled to launch on January 11, 2001, but was delayed numerous times for a variety of reasons over nearly two years. Columbia finally launched on January 16, 2003, with a crew of seven. Eighty seconds into the launch, a piece of foam insulation broke off from the shuttle’s propellant tank and hit the edge of the shuttle’s left wing.

Cameras focused on the launch sequence revealed the foam collision but engineers could not pinpoint the location and extent of the damage. Although similar incidents had occurred on three prior shuttle
launches without causing critical damage, some engineers at the space agency believed that the
damage to the wing could cause a catastrophic failure. Their concerns were not addressed in the two
weeks that Columbia spent in orbit because NASA management believed that even if major damage
had been caused, there was little that could be done to remedy the situation.

Columbia reentered the earth’s atmosphere on the morning of 1 FEB. It wasn’t until 10 minutes
later, at 8:53 a.m.–as the shuttle was 231,000 feet above the California coastline traveling at 23 times
the speed of sound–that the first indications of trouble began. Because the heat-resistant tiles covering
the left wing’s leading edge had been damaged or were missing, wind and heat entered the wing and
blew it apart. The first debris began falling to the ground in west Texas near Lubbock at 8:58 a.m.
One minute later, the last communication from the crew was heard, and at 9 a.m. the shuttle
disintegrated over southeast Texas, near Dallas. Residents in the area heard a loud boom and saw
streaks of smoke in the sky. Debris and the remains of the crew were found in more than 2,000
locations across East Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana. Making the tragedy even worse, two pilots
aboard a search helicopter were killed in a crash while looking for debris. Strangely, worms that the
crew had used in a study that were stored in a canister aboard the Columbia did survive.

In August 2003, an investigation board issued a report that revealed that it in fact would have been
possible either for the Columbia crew to repair the damage to the wing or for the crew to be rescued
from the shuttle. The Columbia could have stayed in orbit until 15 FEB and the already planned
launch of the shuttle Atlantis could have been moved up as early as 10 FEB, leaving a short window
for repairing the wing or getting the crew off of the Columbia. In the aftermath of the Columbia
disaster, the space shuttle program was grounded until July 16, 2005, when the space shuttle
Discovery was put into orbit.

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- **Feb 02 1812 – Old West:** *Russians establish Fort Ross*  »  Staking a tenuous claim to the riches of
the Far West, Russians establish Fort Ross on the coast north of San Francisco. As a growing empire
with a long Pacific coastline, Russia was in many ways well positioned to play a leading role in the
settlement and development of the West. The Russians had begun their expansion into the North
American continent in 1741 with a massive scientific expedition to Alaska. Returning with news of
abundant sea otters, the explorers inspired Russian investment in the Alaskan fur trade and some
permanent settlement. By the early 19th century, the semi-governmental Russian-American Company
was actively competing with British and American fur-trading interests as far south as the shores of
Spanish-controlled California.
Russia’s Alaskan colonists found it difficult to produce their own food because of the short growing season of the far north. Officials of the Russian-American Company reasoned that a permanent settlement along the more temperate shores of California could serve both as a source of food and a base for exploiting the abundant sea otters in the region. To that end, a large party of Russians and Aleuts sailed for California where they established Fort Ross (short for Russia) on the coast north of San Francisco.

Fort Ross, though, proved unable to fulfill either of its expected functions for very long. By the 1820s, the once plentiful sea otters in the region had been hunted almost to extinction. Likewise, the colonists’ attempts at farming proved disappointing, because the cool foggy summers along the coast made it difficult to grow the desired fruits and grains. Potatoes thrived, but they could be grown just as easily in Alaska.

At the same time, the Russians were increasingly coming into conflict with the Mexicans and the growing numbers of Americans settling in the region. Disappointed with the commercial potential of the Fort Ross settlement and realizing they had no realistic chance of making a political claim for the region, the Russians decided to sell out. After making unsuccessful attempts to interest both the British and Mexicans in the fort, the Russians finally found a buyer in John Sutter. An American emigrant to California, Sutter bought Fort Ross in 1841 with an unsecured note for $30,000 that he never paid. He cannibalized the fort to provide supplies for his colony in the Sacramento Valley where, seven years later, a chance discovery ignited the California Gold Rush.

- **Feb 02 1848 – Mexican-American War:** *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is signed* » The Treaty ended the Mexican-American War in favor of the United States. It also added an additional 525,000 square miles to United States territory, including the area that would become the states of Texas, California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona, as well as parts of Colorado and Wyoming. Controversy during and after the war pitted President James K. Polk in a political war against two future presidents: Zachary Taylor and Abraham Lincoln.

Polk, a Democrat, ignited the Mexican-American War when he sent his Commanding General of the Army Zachary Taylor and his troops to claim territory along the Rio Grande River between the U.S. and Mexico. Polk insisted Mexico had invaded the U.S. when an earlier skirmish between American and Mexican troops erupted over the ill-defined territorial boundaries of Texas. Polk’s action was immediately denounced by Abraham Lincoln, then a leading Whig member of Congress, who described the resulting war as unconstitutional, unnecessary and expensive. While Taylor performed his military duty in Texas, Polk wrestled with Congressional opposition led by Lincoln in Washington.
Polk was a firm believer in America’s “Manifest Destiny” of increased U.S. territorial expansion in order to bring democracy and Protestant Christianity to a “backward” region. Lincoln and his cohorts protested not so much expansionism itself, but Polk’s justification of the war. Although the war ended favorably for the U.S., Lincoln continued to attack Polk after the signing of the treaty for his lack of an exit strategy that clearly defined citizenship and property rights for former Mexican citizens. Lincoln called the president “a bewildered, confounded, and miserably perplexed man.” Although Polk’s war was successful, he lost public support after two bloody years of fighting during which the U.S. lost 1,773 men and spent a whopping $100 million.

Meanwhile, Taylor earned national popularity for his heroic actions during the war and for the camaraderie he shared with even his lowliest subordinates. When the war ended, Taylor decided to run for the presidency. One of his political mentors happened to be Abraham Lincoln, who wrote a note to Taylor after the war ended advising him of what he ought to say regarding the Mexican-American War and the question of slavery in any newly won territories. Lincoln suggested that Taylor should declare “we shall probably be under a sort of necessity of taking some territory; but it is my desire that we shall not acquire any extending so far south as to enlarge and aggravate the distracting question of slavery.”

Polk chose not to run again for the presidency, and Taylor barely won the popular vote in a race that included former President Martin Van Buren and Democratic nominee Lewis Cass. Van Buren, the Free-Soil Party candidate and former Democrat, acted as a spoiler, siphoning off Democratic votes that would likely have gone to Cass. Unfortunately for Lincoln, Taylor and his immediate successors failed to address the issue of slavery during their terms, leaving the question to Lincoln to solve over a bloody civil war a decade later.

- **Feb 02 1916 – WWI:** Two days after nine German zeppelins dropped close to 400 bombs throughout the English Midlands, the crew of the British fishing trawler King Stephen comes across the crashed remains of one of the giant airships floating in the North Sea.

- **Feb 02 1943 – WW2:** Quisling becomes prime minister of puppet regime in Norway » Vidkun Quisling, a collaborator with the German occupiers of Norway, is established as prime minister of a puppet government.

  On April 9, 1940, German warships entered major Norwegian ports, from Narvik to Oslo, deployed thousands of German troops, and occupied Norway. German forces were able to slip through the mines Britain had laid around Norwegian ports because local garrisons were ordered to allow the Germans to land unopposed. The order came from a Norwegian commander, Vidkun Quisling, who was loyal to Norway’s pro-fascist former foreign minister.

  Hours after the invasion, the German minister in Oslo demanded Norway’s surrender. The Norwegian government refused, and the Germans responded with a parachute invasion. In September 1940, “commissarial counselors” in the control of the Germans replaced Norway’s administrative council. Chief of these “counselors” was Quisling, who was given dictatorial powers and who proceeded to earn the enmity of Norwegians as he sent thousands of people to German concentration camps and executed members of the resistance movement.

  On February 1, 1942, the commissarial counselors formed a formal government loyal to Germany, with Quisling as its prime minister. When Germany finally surrendered in May 1945, Quisling was arrested by Norway’s Allied liberators, tried for treason, and executed. His name continues to be a synonym for “traitor.”
Feb 02 1943 – WW2: Battle of Stalingrad ends » The last German troops in the Soviet city of Stalingrad surrender to the Red Army, ending one of the pivotal battles of World War II.

On June 22, 1941, despite the terms of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939, Nazi Germany launched a massive invasion against the USSR. Aided by its greatly superior air force, the German army raced across the Russian plains, inflicting terrible casualties on the Red Army and the Soviet population. With the assistance of troops from their Axis allies, the Germans conquered vast territory, and by mid-October the great Russian cities of Leningrad and Moscow were under siege. However, the Soviets held on, and the coming of winter forced a pause to the German offensive.

For the 1942 summer offensive, Adolf Hitler ordered the Sixth Army, under General Friedrich von Paulus, to take Stalingrad in the south, an industrial center and obstacle to Nazi control of the precious Caucasian oil wells. In August, the German Sixth Army made advances across the Volga River while the German Fourth Air Fleet reduced Stalingrad to a burning rubble, killing over 40,000 civilians. In early September, General Paulus ordered the first offensives into Stalingrad, estimating that it would take his army about 10 days to capture the city. Thus began one of the most horrific battles of World War II and arguably the most important because it was the turning point in the war between Germany and the USSR.

In their attempt to take Stalingrad, the German Sixth Army faced a bitter Red Army under General Vasily Zhukov employing the ruined city to their advantage, transforming destroyed buildings and rubble into natural defensive fortifications. In a method of fighting the Germans began to call the Rattenkrieg, or “Rat’s War,” the opposing forces broke into squads eight or 10 strong and fought each other for every house and yard of territory. The battle saw rapid advances in street-fighting technology, such as a German machine gun that shot around corners and a light Russian plane that glided silently over German positions at night, dropping lethal bombs without warning. However, both sides lacked necessary food, water, or medical supplies, and tens of thousands perished every week.

Soviet leader Joseph Stalin was determined to liberate the city named after him, and in November he ordered massive reinforcements to the area. On November 19, General Zhukov launched a great Soviet counteroffensive out of the rubble of Stalingrad. German command underestimated the scale of the counterattack, and the Sixth Army was quickly overwhelmed by the offensive, which involved 500,000 Soviet troops, 900 tanks, and 1,400 aircraft. Within three days, the entire German force of more than 200,000 men was encircled.

Italian and Romanian troops at Stalingrad surrendered, but the Germans hung on, receiving limited supplies by air and waiting for reinforcements. Hitler ordered Von Paulus to remain in place and
promoted him to field marshal, as no Nazi field marshal had ever surrendered. Starvation and the bitter Russian winter took as many lives as the merciless Soviet troops, and on January 21, 1943, the last of the airports held by the Germans fell to the Soviets, completely cutting the Germans off from supplies. On January 31, Von Paulus surrendered German forces in the southern sector, and on February 2 the remaining German troops surrendered. Only 90,000 German soldiers were still alive, and of these only 5,000 troops would survive the Soviet prisoner-of-war camps and make it back to Germany.

The Battle of Stalingrad turned the tide in the war between Germany and the Soviet Union. General Zhukov, who had played such an important role in the victory, later led the Soviet drive on Berlin. On May 1, 1945, he personally accepted the German surrender of Berlin. Von Paulus, meanwhile, agitated against Adolf Hitler among the German prisoners of war in the Soviet Union and in 1946 provided testimony at the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. After his release by the Soviets in 1953, he settled in East Germany.

- **Feb 02 1949 – Cold War:** In response to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin’s proposal that President Harry S. Truman travel to Russia for a conference, Secretary of State Dean Acheson brusquely rejects the idea as a “political maneuver.” This rather curious exchange was further evidence of the diplomatic sparring between the United States and the Soviet Union that was so characteristic of the early years of the Cold War.

- **Feb 02 1962 – Vietnam War:** *First U.S. Air Force plane crashes in South Vietnam* » The C-123 aircraft crashed while spraying defoliant on a Viet Cong ambush site. The aircraft was part of Operation Ranch Hand, a technological area-denial technique designed to expose the roads and trails used by the Viet Cong. U.S. personnel dumped an estimated 19 million gallons of defoliating herbicides over 10-20 percent of Vietnam and parts of Laos from 1962 to 1971. Agent Orange—so named from the color of its metal containers—was the most frequently used.

  The operation succeeded in killing vegetation but not in stopping the Viet Cong. The use of these agents was controversial, both during and after the war, because of questions about long-term ecological impacts and the effect on humans who handled or were sprayed by the chemicals. Beginning in the late 1970s, Vietnam veterans began to cite the herbicides, especially Agent Orange, as the cause of health problems ranging from skin rashes to cancer and birth defects in their children. Similar problems, including an abnormally high incidence of miscarriages and congenital malformations, have been reported among the Vietnamese people who lived in the areas where the defoliate agents were used.

- **Feb 02 1962 – Vietnam War:** *Antiwar protestors sue Dow Chemical* » Antiwar protestors take legal action in an attempt to prove that the Dow Chemical Company is still making napalm. Dow had claimed that it had stopped making napalm. Members of the antiwar movement filed suit against the Dow Chemical Company in a Washington, D.C., court. The plaintiffs were trying to force the company to disclose all government contracts to prove that the company was still making napalm.
Feb 02 1989 – Soviet war in Afghanistan: Soviet participation in the war in Afghanistan ended as Red Army troops withdrew from the capital city of Kabul. They left behind many of their arms for use by Afghan government forces. They were driven out principally by the insurgent mujahadin, armed through covert U.S. funding.

-Feb 03 1781 – American Revolution: British forces seize the Dutch-owned Caribbean island Sint Eustatius.

Feb 03 1783 – American Revolution: Spain recognizes United States independence.

Feb 03 1904 – Panama: Colombian troops clash with U.S. Marines in Panama.

Feb 03 1917 – WWI: A day after Germany announced a new policy of unrestricted submarine warfare President Woodrow Wilson speaks for two hours before a historic session of Congress to announce that the United States is breaking diplomatic relations with them.

Feb 03 1943 – WW2: The USAT Dorchester is sunk by a German U-boat. Only 230 of 902 men aboard survived. Congress declares this as Four Chaplains Day. The Chapel of the Four Chaplains, dedicated by President Harry Truman, is one of many memorials established to commemorate the Four Chaplains story.

Feb 03 1944 – WW2: Beginning of the German Army offensive against the Anzio bridgehead in Italy.

Feb 03 1944 – WW2: U.S. troops capture the Marshall Islands  » American forces invade and take control of the Marshall Islands, long occupied by the Japanese and used by them as a base for military operations.
The Marshalls, east of the Caroline Islands in the western Pacific Ocean, had been in Japanese hands since World War I. Occupied by the Japanese in 1914, they were made part of the “Japanese Mandated Islands” as determined by the League of Nations. The Treaty of Versailles, which concluded the First World War, stipulated certain islands formerly controlled by Germany—including the Marshalls, the Carolines, and the Marianas (except Guam)—had to be ceded to the Japanese, though “overseen” by the League. But the Japanese withdrew from the League in 1933 and began transforming the Mandated Islands into military bases. Non-Japanese, including Christian missionaries, were kept from the islands as naval and air bases—meant to threaten shipping lanes between Australia and Hawaii—were constructed.

During the Second World War, these islands, as well as others in the vicinity, became targets of Allied attacks. The U.S. Central Pacific Campaign began with the Gilbert Islands, south of the Mandated Islands; U.S. forces conquered the Gilberts in November 1943. Next on the agenda was Operation Flintlock, a plan to capture the Marshall Islands.

Adm. Raymond Spruance led the 5th Fleet from Pearl Harbor on January 22, 1944, to the Marshalls, with the goal of getting 53,000 assault troops ashore two islets: Roi and Namur. Meanwhile, using the Gilberts as an air base, American planes bombed the Japanese administrative and communications center for the Marshalls, which was located on Kwajalein, an atoll that was part of the Marshall cluster of atolls, islets, and reefs.

By 31 JAN, Kwajalein was devastated. Repeated carrier- and land-based air raids destroyed every Japanese airplane on the Marshalls. By 3 FEB, U.S. infantry overran Roi and Namur atolls. The Marshalls were then effectively in American hands—with the loss of only 400 American lives.

- **Feb 03 1944 – WW2:** The United States shells the Japanese homeland for the first time at Kurile Islands.

- **Feb 03 1945 – WW2:** As part of Operation Thunderclap, 1000 B–17’s of the Eighth Air Force bomb Berlin, a raid which kills between 2,500 to 3,000 and dehouses another 120,000.

- **Feb 03 1945 – WW2:** The United States and the Philippine Commonwealth begin a month-long battle to retake Manila from Japan.

- **Feb 03 1950 – Cold War:** Klaus Fuchs, a German-born British scientist who helped developed the atomic bomb, is arrested in Great Britain for passing top-secret information about the bomb to the
Soviet Union. The arrest of Fuchs led authorities to several other individuals involved in a spy ring, culminating with the arrest of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and their subsequent execution.

- **Feb 03 1955 – U.S.*Vietnam: **Diem institutes limited agrarian reforms » After months of prodding by U.S. advisors, South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem introduces the first in a series of agrarian reform measures. This first measure was a decree governing levels of rent for farmland.

  U.S. officials had strongly urged that Diem institute such reforms to win the support of the common people, but later critics maintained his land reform program began too late, progressed too slowly, and never went far enough. What the South Vietnamese farmers wanted was a redistribution of land from the absentee landlords to those that actually worked the fields, but Diem’s program to return the land to the tiller was implemented halfheartedly and did little to meet the rising appetite for land among South Vietnam’s rural population. Provisions for payment by peasants granted land created unnecessary hardships. Although 1 million tenants received some relief, more than 1 million received no land at all, and the lack of impartial enforcement agencies crippled many potential benefits. Instead of redistributing land to the poor, Diem’s land reform program ended up taking back what the peasants had been given by the Viet Minh and returning it to the landlords, forcing peasants to pay for the land they considered theirs on impossible terms. In 1960, 75 percent of the land was owned by 15 percent of the people. The communists capitalized on unresolved peasant unrest throughout Diem’s regime. Discontent towards Diem reached its height when dissident South Vietnamese officers murdered him during a coup in November 1963.

- **Feb 03 1961 – Cold War: **The United States Air Forces begins Operation Looking Glass, and over the next 30 years, a "Doomsday Plane" is always in the air, with the capability of taking direct control of the United States' bombers and missiles in the event of the destruction of the SAC's command post.

- **Feb 03 1966 – Aviation: **Lunik 9 soft-lands on lunar surface » The Soviet Union accomplishes the first controlled landing on the moon, when the unmanned spacecraft Lunik 9 touches down on the Ocean of Storms. After its soft landing, the circular capsule opened like a flower, deploying its antennas, and began transmitting photographs and television images back to Earth. The 220-pound landing capsule was launched from Earth on 31 JAN.

  Lunik 9 was the third major lunar first for the Soviet space program: On September 14, 1959, Lunik 2 became the first manmade object to reach the moon when it impacted with the lunar surface, and on 7 OCT of the same year Lunik 3 flew around the moon and transmitted back to Earth the first images of the dark side of the moon. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the U.S. space program consistently trailed the Soviet program in space firsts—a pattern that shifted dramatically with the triumph of America’s Apollo lunar program in the late 1960s.
• **Feb 03 1994 – Post Vietnam War:** *Clinton ends Vietnam trade embargo*  » Nearly two decades after the fall of Saigon, U.S. President Bill Clinton announces the lifting of the 19-year-old trade embargo against Vietnam, citing the cooperation of Vietnam’s communist government in helping the United States locate the 2,238 Americans still listed as missing in the Vietnam War. Despite the lifting of the embargo, high tariffs remained on Vietnamese exports pending the country’s qualification as a “most favored nation,” a U.S. trade-status designation that Vietnam might earn after broadening its program of free-market reforms.

In July 1995, the Clinton administration established full diplomatic relations with Vietnam. In making the decision, Clinton was advised by Republican Senator John McCain of Arizona, an ex-Navy pilot who spent five years as a prisoner of war in Hanoi. Brushing aside criticism of Clinton’s decision by some Republicans, McCain asserted that it was time for America to normalize relations with its old enemy.

Five years later, in November 2000, President Clinton became the first president to visit Vietnam since Richard Nixon’s 1969 trip to South Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

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• **Feb 04 1861 – Civil War:** *States meet to form Confederacy*  » The Confederacy is open for business when in Montgomery, Alabama, delegates from six break-away U.S. states convene the Provisional Confederate Congress and form the Confederate States of America. The first order of business was drafting a constitution. The congress used the U.S. Constitution as a model, taking most of it verbatim. In just four days, a tentative document to govern the new nation was hammered out. Unlike the U.S. Constitution, the word “slave” was used and the institution protected in all states and any territories to be added later. Importation of slaves was prohibited, as this would alienate European nations and would detract from the profitable “internal slave trade” in the South. Other components of the constitution were designed to enhance the power of the states—governmental money for internal improvements was banned and the president was given a line-item veto on appropriations bills.

As early as 1858, the ongoing conflict between the North and the South over the issue of slavery led Southern leadership to discuss a unified separation from the United States. By 1860, the majority of the slave states were publicly threatening secession if the Republicans, the anti-slavery party, won the presidency. Following Abraham Lincoln’s victory over the divided Democratic Party in November 1860, South Carolina immediately initiated secession proceedings. On 20 DEC, its legislature passed the “Ordinance of Secession,” which declared that “the Union now subsisting between South Carolina and other states, under the name of the United States of America, is hereby dissolved.” After the declaration, South Carolina set about seizing forts, arsenals, and other strategic locations within the state. Within six weeks, five more Southern states had followed South Carolina’s lead.
In February 1861, representatives from the six seceded states met in Montgomery, Alabama, to formally establish a unified government, which they named the Confederate States of America. On 9 Feb, Jefferson Davis, a West Point graduate and former U.S. senator from Mississippi who served as the U.S. secretary of war in the 1850s, was elected the Confederacy’s first president.

- **Feb 04 1899 – Philippine-American War:** The war begins with the two day Battle of Manila. Casualties and losses: US 285 - PI 2,000

- **Feb 04 1915 – WWI:** Germany declares war zone around British Isles » A full two years before Germany’s aggressive naval policy would draw the United States into the war against them, Kaiser Wilhelm announces an important step in the development of that policy, proclaiming the North Sea a war zone, in which all merchant ships, including those from neutral countries, were liable to be sunk without warning.

In widening the boundaries of naval warfare, Germany was retaliating against the Allies for the British-imposed blockade of Germany in the North Sea, an important part of Britain’s war strategy aimed at strangling its enemy economically. By war’s end—according to official British counts—the so-called hunger blockade would take some 770,000 German lives.

The German navy, despite its attempts to build itself up in the pre-war years, was far inferior in strength to the peerless British Royal Navy. After resounding defeats of its battle cruisers, such as that suffered in the Falkland Islands in December 1914, Germany began to look to its dangerous U-boat submarines as its best hope at sea. Hermann Bauer, the leader of the German submarine service, had suggested in October 1914 that the U-boats could be used to attack commerce ships and raid their cargoes, thus scaring off imports to Britain, including those from neutral countries. Early the following month, Britain declared the North Sea a military area, warning neutral countries that areas would be mined and that all ships must first put into British ports, where they would be searched for possible supplies bound for Germany, stripped of these, and escorted through the British minefields. With this intensification of the blockade, Bauer’s idea gained greater support within Germany as the only appropriate response to Britain’s actions.

Though German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg and the German Foreign Ministry worried about angering neutral countries, pressure from naval leaders and anger in the German press about the British blockade convinced them to go through with the declaration. On February 4, 1915, Kaiser Wilhelm announced Germany’s intention to sink any and all ships sailing under the flags of Britain, Russia or France found within British waters. The Kaiser warned neutral countries that neither crews nor passengers were safe while traveling within the designated war zone around the British Isles. If neutral ships chose to enter British waters after February 18, when the policy went into effect, they would be doing so at their own risk.
The U.S. government immediately and strongly protested the war-zone designation, warning Germany that it would take any steps it might be necessary to take in order to protect American lives and property. Subsequently, a rift opened between Germany’s politicians—who didn’t want to provoke America’s anger—and its navy, which was determined to use its deadly U-boats to the greatest possible advantage.

After a German U-boat sank the British passenger ship Lusitania on May 7, 1915, killing over 1,000 people, including 128 Americans, pressure from the U.S. prompted the German government to greatly constrain the operation of submarines; U-boat warfare was completely suspended that September. Unrestricted submarine warfare was resumed on February 1, 1917, prompting the U.S., two days later, to break diplomatic relations with Germany.

- **Feb 04 1941 – WW2:** The United Service Organization (USO) is created to entertain American troops.
- **Feb 04 1945 – WW2:** Santo Tomas Internment Camp is liberated from Japanese authority.
- **Feb 04 1945 – WW2:** First firebombing raid against Japan at Kobe.
- **Feb 04 1945 – WW2:** *The Yalta Conference commences* » President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Premier Joseph Stalin meet at Yalta, in the Crimea, to discuss and plan the postwar world—namely, to address the redistribution of power and influence. It is at Yalta that many place the birth of the Cold War.

It had already been determined that a defeated Germany would be sliced up into zones occupied by the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, the principal Allied powers. Once in Germany, the Allies would see to the deconstruction of the German military and the prosecution of war criminals. A special commission would also determine war reparations.

But the most significant issue, the one that marked the conference in history, was Joseph Stalin’s designs on Eastern Europe. (Stalin’s demands had started early with his desire that the location of the conference be at a Black Sea resort close to the USSR. He claimed he was too ill to travel far.) Roosevelt and Churchill attempted to create a united front against the Soviet dictator; their advisers had already mapped out clear positions on Europe and the creation and mission of the United Nations.
They propounded the principles of the Atlantic Charter, formulated back in August 1941, that would ensure “life, liberty, independence, and religious freedom” for a free Europe and guarantee that only those nations that had declared war on the Axis powers would gain entry into the new United Nations.

Stalin agreed to these broad principles (although he withdrew his promise that all 16 Soviet republics would have separate representation within the United Nations), as well as an agreement that the Big Three would help any nation formerly in the grip of an Axis power in the establishment of “interim governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population… and the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people.” Toward that end, Roosevelt and Churchill gave support to the Polish government-in-exile in London; Stalin demurred, insisting that the communist-dominated and Soviet-loyal Polish Committee of National Liberation, based in Poland, would govern. The only compromise reached was the inclusion of “other” political groups in the committee. As for Poland’s new borders, they were discussed, but no conclusions were reached.

The conference provided the illusion of more unanimity than actually existed, especially in light of Stalin’s reneging on his promise of free elections in those Eastern European nations the Soviets occupied at war’s end. Roosevelt and Churchill had believed Stalin’s promises, primarily because they needed to—they were convinced the USSR’s support in defeating the Japanese was crucial. In fact, the USSR played much less of a role in ending the war in the East than assumed. But there was no going back. A divisive “iron curtain,” in Churchill’s famous phrase, was beginning to descend in Europe.

As the Cold War became a reality in the years that followed the Yalta Conference, many critics of Roosevelt’s foreign policy accused him of “selling out” at the meeting and naively letting Stalin have his way. It seems doubtful, however, that Roosevelt had much choice. He was able to secure Russian participation in the war against Japan (Russia declared war on Japan on August 8, 1945), established the basic principles of the United Nations, and did as much as possible to settle the Poland issue. With World War II still raging, his primary interest was in maintaining the Grand Alliance. He believed that troublesome political issues could be postponed and solved after the war. Unfortunately, Roosevelt never got that chance—almost exactly two months after the end of the conference, Roosevelt suffered a stroke and died.

- **Feb 04 1945 – WW2**: The British Indian Army and Imperial Japanese Army begin a series of battles known as the Battle of Pokoku and Irrawaddy River operations.

- **Feb 04 1945 – WW2**: USS Barbel (SS–316) sunk by Japanese naval aircraft in South China Sea in Palawan Passage. 81 killed.

- **Feb 04 1957 – U.S. Navy**: The first nuclear-powered submarine, the USS Nautilus (SSN–571), logs its 60,000th nautical mile.
• **Feb 04 1962 – Vietnam War:** *First U.S. helicopter is shot down in Vietnam*  
It was one of 15 helicopters ferrying South Vietnamese Army troops into battle near the village of Hong My in the Mekong Delta. The first U.S. helicopter unit had arrived in South Vietnam aboard the ferry carrier USNS Core on December 11, 1961. 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.

• **Feb 04 1965 – Vietnam War:** *Rumors fly about U.S.-Soviet pressure on allies in Vietnam*  
McGeorge Bundy, American Special Assistant for National Security, arrives in Saigon for talks with U.S. Ambassador General Maxwell Taylor. Two days later Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin arrived in Hanoi. There was worldwide speculation that their visits were linked—that the United States and the Soviet Union had agreed to pressure their “clients” into negotiations—but this was denied by all the principals. Bundy, in fact, was there to confer with Ambassador Taylor on the best way to deal with the political situation. And although Kosygin publicly proclaimed continued Soviet support for North Vietnam and the communist war, a Soviet participant in the talks later described the North Vietnamese as “a bunch of stubborn bastards.”

• **Feb 04 1969 – PLO:** *PLO is founded*  
With Yasir Arafat as its leader, the Palestine Liberation Organization was founded on February 4, 1969. By 1974 when he addressed the United Nations, Arafat had made significant strides towards establishing new respectability for the PLO’s campaign for a Palestinian homeland. But gaining legitimacy hinged on cooling down terrorism, and Arafat found it increasingly difficult to reconcile the moderate and extremist segments of Palestinian politics.

• **Feb 04 1972 – Vietnam War:** *Last Thai contingent departs South Vietnam*  
A force of 824 soldiers, the last of Thailand’s 12,000 troops serving in South Vietnam, departs. The Thai contingent, which had first arrived in country in the fall of 1967, had been 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. In all, 44 countries responded to Johnson plea for military aid to South Vietnam, but only Australia, New Zealand,
Korea, and Thailand provided combat troops. In the end, the program never achieved the widespread international support that Johnson sought.

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- **Feb 05 1865 – Civil War:** *The Battle of Dabney’s Mill (Hatcher’s Run)* - Union and Confederate forces around Petersburg, Virginia, begin a three-day battle that produces 3,000 casualties but ends with no significant advantage for either side.

Dabney’s Mill was another attempt by Union General Ulysses S. Grant to break the siege of Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia. In 1864, Grant and Confederate General Robert E. Lee pounded each other as they wheeled south around the cities. After a month of heavy battling that produced the highest casualty rates of the war, Grant and Lee settled into trenches around Petersburg. These lines eventually stretched 25 miles to Richmond, and the stalemate continued for 10 months. Periodically, Grant mounted offensives either to break through Lee’s lines or envelope the ends. In June, August, and October, these moves failed to extricate the Confederates from their trenches.

Now, Grant sent cavalry under General David Gregg to capture a road that carried supplies from Hicksford, Virginia, into Petersburg. On 5 FEB, Gregg moved and captured a few wagons along his objective, the Boydton Plank Road. He found little else, so he pulled back toward the rest of the Union Army. Yankee infantry under General Gouverneur K. Warren also moved forward and probed the area at the end of the Confederate’s Petersburg line. The Rebels responded by moving troops into the area. Skirmishes erupted that evening and the fighting continued for two more days as each side maneuvered for an advantage. The fighting surged back and forth around Dabney’s Mill, but the Yankees were never able to penetrate the Confederate lines. The Union suffered some 2,000 men killed, wounded, or captured, while the Confederates lost about 1,000. The battle did extend the Petersburg line a few miles to further stretch Lee’s lines, but the stalemate continued for six more weeks before Grant’s forces finally sent Lee racing west with the remnants of his army. The chase ended in April 1865 when Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House, Virginia.

- **Feb 05 1918 – WWI:** Luxury Liner SS Tuscania is torpedoed off the coast of Ireland; it is the first ship carrying American troops to Europe to be torpedoed and sunk.
The German submarine U-77, with its crew of 34 men under the command of Lieutenant Commander Wilhelm Meyer, spotted the Tuscania and its convoy just eight miles off the Irish coast. After moving into position, Meyer fired two torpedoes at the Tuscania. The first torpedo missed, but the second torpedo scored a direct hit on the starboard side, causing a terrific explosion. The 14,384-ton steamer immediately took a great list and crewmembers were plunged into darkness as they began lowering lifeboats into the sea. Of the 2,397 American servicemen on the Tuscania, the convoy was able to rescue 2,187, along with the majority of the ship’s British crew.

- **Feb 05 1918 – WWI:** Stephen W. Thompson shot down a German airplane. Flying as a gunner on a French aircraft in February 1918, he became the first member of the United States military to shoot down an enemy aircraft. Kiffin Rockwell achieved an earlier aerial victory as an American volunteer member of the French Lafayette Escadrille in 1916.

- **Feb 05 1941 – WWI:** *Hitler to Mussolini: Fight harder!* Adolf Hitler scolds his Axis partner, Benito Mussolini, for his troops’ retreat in the face of British advances in Libya, demanding that the Duce command his forces to resist.

  Since 1912, Italy had occupied Libya because of purely economic “expansion” motives. In 1935, Mussolini began sending tens of thousands of Italians to Libya, mostly farmers and other rural workers, in part to relieve overpopulation concerns in Italy. So by the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, Italy had enjoyed a long-term presence in North Africa, and Mussolini began dreaming of expanding that presence—always with an eye toward the same territories that the old “Roman Empire” had counted among its conquests.

  Also sitting in North Africa were British troops, which, under a 1936 treaty, were garrisoned in Egypt to protect the Suez Canal and Royal Navy bases at Alexandria and Port Said. Hitler had offered to aid Mussolini early on in his North African expansion, to send German troops to help fend off a British counterattack. But Mussolini had been rebuffed when he had offered Italian assistance during the Battle of Britain. He now insisted that as a matter of national pride, Italy would have to create a Mediterranean sphere of influence on its own—or risk becoming a “junior” partner of Germany’s.

  But despite expansion into parts of East Africa and Egypt, Mussolini’s forces proved no match for the Brits in the long run. British troops pushed the Italians westward, inflicting extraordinary losses on the Axis forces in an attack at Beda Fomm. As Britain threatened to push the Italians out of Libya altogether and break through to Tunisia, Mussolini swallowed his pride and asked Hitler for assistance. Hitler reluctantly agreed (it would mean the first direct German-British encounter in the Mediterranean)—but only if Mussolini stopped the Italians’ retreat and kept the British out of Tripoli, the Libyan capital. But the Italians continued to be overwhelmed; in three months, 20,000 men were wounded or killed and 130,000 were taken prisoner. Only with the arrival of German Gen. Erwin Rommel would the Italian resistance be strengthened against further British advances. Even with Germany’s help, Italy was able to defend its North African territory only until early 1943.
Feb 05 1941 – WW2: Allied forces begin the Battle of Keren to capture Keren, Eritrea (Africa). Casualties and losses: UK/IN/FR 3,765 - Italy 33,847.


Feb 05 1958 – U.S. Air Force: A hydrogen bomb known as the Tybee Bomb is lost by the US Air Force off the coast of Savannah, Georgia, never to be recovered.

Feb 05 1960 – Vietnam War: South Vietnam requests more support » The South Vietnamese government requests that Washington double U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG-Vietnam) strength from 342 to 685. The advisory group was formed on November 1, 1955 to provide military assistance to South Vietnam. It had replaced U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group Indochina (MAAG-Indochina), which had been providing military assistance to “the forces of France and the Associated States in Indochina” (Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam) in accordance with President Harry S. Truman’s order of June 27, 1950.

MAAG-Vietnam had U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps elements that provided advice and assistance to the South Vietnamese Ministry of Defense, Joint General Staff and corps and division commanders, as well as to training centers and province and district headquarters. In May 1964, MAAG-Vietnam was disbanded and its personnel and responsibilities absorbed by the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), which had been established in Saigon two years earlier.

Feb 05 1968 – Vietnam War: Battle of Khe Sanh begins.

Feb 05 1975 – Vietnam War: North Vietnamese begin preparations for offensive » North Vietnamese Gen. Van Tien Dung deports for South Vietnam to take command of communist forces in preparation for a new offensive. In December 1974, the North Vietnamese 7th Division and the newly formed 3rd Division attacked 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 would react 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 new offensive. With Nixon’s Watergate resignation and Ford facing an increasingly hostile Congress, Hanoi was essentially conducting a “test” attack to see if the United States 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 United States did nothing.

Emboldened by their success, the North Vietnamese decided to launch a major offensive against the South Vietnamese. “Campaign 275” began on March 1, 1975. The North Vietnamese forces quickly overran the South Vietnamese and the United States failed to provide the promised support. Saigon fell on April 30 and the South Vietnamese government officially surrendered.

- **Feb 05 1989 – Afghanistan:** In an important move signaling the close of the nearly decade-long Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, the last Russian troops withdraw from the capital city of Kabul. Less than two weeks later, all Soviet troops departed Afghanistan entirely, ending what many observers referred to as Russia’s “Vietnam.”

- **Feb 05 2007 – Iraq:** American Lieutenant Ehren Watada faced a court martial for refusing to deploy to Iraq and for publicly criticizing the war, the first officer since Vietnam to be so tried. A volunteer from Hawaii who joined the U.S. Army prior to the invasion in 2003. Initially having served in South Korea, he learned more about the Iraqi conflict and the bogus claims of Saddam Hussein’s possession of weapons of mass destruction.

- **Feb 06 1778 – American Revolution:** Representatives from the United States and France sign the Treaty of Amity and Commerce and the Treaty of Alliance in Paris. The Treaty of Amity and Commerce recognized the United States as an independent nation and encouraged trade between France and the America, while the Treaty of Alliance provided for a military alliance against Great Britain, stipulating that the absolute independence of the United States be recognized as a condition for peace and that France would be permitted to conquer the British West Indies.

Feb 06 1865 – Civil War: John Pegram killed Confederate General John Pegram, age 33, is killed at the Battle of Dabney’s Mill (also called Hatcher’s Run), Virginia.

Pegram graduated from West Point in 1854, and served in various posts in the West before resigning his commission at the start of the Civil War. Pegram then received an appointment as a lieutenant colonel in the Confederate army. Sent to fight in western Virginia during the summer of 1861, he was captured by General George McClellan’s men at the Battle of Rich Mountain. Pegram was exchanged in April 1862 and sent to serve with General Pierre G. T. Beauregard in Mississippi. He fought in Tennessee and Kentucky and earned a promotion to brigadier general. After the Battle of Chickamauga in September 1863, Pegram was transferred to General Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia. He was wounded at the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864, but recovered to fight with General Jubal Early during the Shenandoah Valley campaign in the summer of 1864. That fall, he was sent to defend his native city of Petersburg, Virginia.

On January 19, 1865, Pegram married Hetty Cary, a prominent Richmond socialite. Even in the gloom of the ongoing siege, the ceremony was a grand affair attended by nearly all of the high-ranking Confederates, including President Jefferson Davis and his wife, Varina. One onlooker said of the bride that the “happy gleam of her beautiful brown eyes seemed to defy all sorrow.” Just three weeks later, Pegram’s body was returned to the same church, St. Paul’s Episcopal, and his young widow knelt beside his coffin as the minister who married them presided over the general’s funeral.

Feb 06 1899 – Spanish American War: The Treaty of Paris (1898), a peace treaty between the United States and Spain, is ratified by the United States Senate.

Feb 06 1917 – WWI: Just three days after U.S. President Woodrow Wilson’s speech of February 3, 1917—in which he broke diplomatic relations with Germany and warned that war would follow if American interests at sea were again assaulted—a German submarine torpedoes and sinks the Anchor Line passenger steamer California off the Irish coast.

Feb 06 1922 – U.S. Navy: The Washington Naval Treaty was signed in Washington, DC, limiting the naval armaments of United States, Britain, Japan, France, and Italy.
Feb 06 1943 – WW2: Mussolini fires his son-in-law » Wary of his growing antiwar attitude, Benito Mussolini removes Count Galeazzo Ciano, his son-in-law, as head of Italy’s foreign ministry and takes over the duty himself.

Ciano had been loyal to the fascist cause since its inception, having taking part in the march on Rome in 1922, which marked the Black Shirts’ rise to power in Italy. He graduated from the University of Rome with a degree in law, and then went to work as a journalist. Soon thereafter he began a career in Italy’s diplomatic corps, working as consul general in China. He married Mussolini’s daughter, Edda, in 1930; from there it was a swift climb up the political ladder: from chief of the press bureau to member of the Fascist Grand Council, Mussolini’s inner circle of advisers.

Ciano flew a bombing raid against Ethiopia in 1935-36 and was made foreign minister upon his return to Rome. Both because of his experience in foreign affairs and personal relationship to the Duce, Ciano became Mussolini’s right-hand man and likely successor. It was Ciano who promoted an Italian alliance with Germany, despite Mussolini’s virtual contempt for Hitler. Ciano began to suspect the Fuhrer’s loyalty to the “Pact of Steel”–a term Mussolini used to describe the alliance between Germany and Italy–when Germany invaded Poland without consulting its Axis partner, despite an agreement to the contrary Ciano made with his German counterpart, Joachim von Ribbentrop. Despite his concern about Germany’s loyalty, he felt that Italy stood to profit nicely from an alliance with the “winning side,” so when France fell to the Germans, Ciano advocated Italian participation in the war against the Allies.

After humiliating defeats in Greece and North Africa, Ciano began arguing for a peace agreement with the Allies. Mussolini considered this defeatist–and dismissed him as foreign minister, taking control of that office himself. Ciano became ambassador to the Vatican until he and other members of the Grand Council finally pushed Mussolini out of power in July 1943. Mussolini never forgave his son-in-law for what he later considered a betrayal. Ciano soon fled Rome for the north when the new provisional government began preparing charges of embezzlement against him. Ciano unwittingly fled into the arms of pro-fascist forces in northern Italy and was charged with treason. He was executed on January 11, 1944 on his father-in-law’s orders–Mussolini was installed in a puppet government that had been set up by the Germans. Ciano’s diaries, which contained brutally frank and sardonic commentaries on the personalities of the war era, are considered an invaluable part of the historical record.

Feb 06 1943 – WW2: The U.S. government required the 110,000 disposessed Japanese Americans forcibly held in concentration (internment) camps to answer loyalty surveys.
The Manzanar Relocation Center, a one of the concentration camps where Japanese-Americans were forced to live throughout World War II.

- **Feb 06 1945 – WW2:** MacArthur reports the fall of Manila, and the liberation of 5,000 prisoners.

- **Feb 06 1959 – Cold War:** The United States successfully test-fired its first intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), known as Titan, from Cape Canaveral. It was a two-stage rocket designed to carry nuclear warheads.

- **Feb 06 1966 – Vietnam War:** *Johnson meets with South Vietnamese Premier.* Accompanied by his leading political and military advisers, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson meets with South Vietnamese Premier Nguyen Cao Ky in Honolulu.

  The talks concluded with issuance of a joint declaration in which the United States promised to help South Vietnam “prevent aggression,” develop its economy, and establish “the principles of self-determination of peoples and government by the consent of the governed.” Johnson declared: “We are determined to win not only military victory but victory over hunger, disease, and despair.” He announced renewed emphasis on “The Other War”—the effort to provide the South Vietnamese rural population with local security, and economic and social programs to win over their active support. In
his final statement on the discussions, Johnson warned the South Vietnamese that he would be monitoring their efforts to build democracy, improve education and health care, resettle refugees and reconstruct South Vietnam’s economy.

• **Feb 06 1973 – Vietnam War:** *ICCS take up positions* » Supervisors from the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS), delegated to oversee the cease-fire, start to take up their positions.

  The cease-fire had gone into effect as a provision of the Paris Peace Accords. The ICCS included representatives from Canada, Poland, Hungary, and Indonesia, and was supposed to supervise the cease-fire. However, the ICCS had no enforcement powers and had extreme difficulty in settling the many quarrels that quickly arose. In the end, the ICCS proved incapable of enforcing the provisions of the Accords and was largely ineffectual. Consequently, renewed fighting between the South and North Vietnamese broke out after only a brief lull and continued for the next two years, until the North Vietnamese successfully launched their final offensive in 1975 and South Vietnam surrendered.

• **Feb 06 1985 – Cold War:** *The “Reagan Doctrine” is announced* » In his State of the Union address, President Ronald Reagan defines some of the key concepts of his foreign policy, establishing what comes to be known as the “Reagan Doctrine.” The doctrine served as the foundation for the Reagan administration’s support of “freedom fighters” around the globe.

  Reagan began his foreign policy comments with the dramatic pronouncement that, “Freedom is not the sole prerogative of a chosen few; it is the universal right of all God’s children.” America’s “mission” was to “nourish and defend freedom and democracy.” More specifically, Reagan declared that, “We must stand by our democratic allies. And we must not break faith with those who are risking their lives—on every continent, from Afghanistan to Nicaragua—to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth.” He concluded, “Support for freedom fighters is self-defense.”

  With these words, the Reagan administration laid the foundation for its program of military assistance to “freedom fighters.” In action, this policy translated into covertly supporting the Contras in their attacks on the leftist Sandinista government in Nicaragua; the Afghan rebels in their fight against the Soviet occupiers; and anticommmunist Angolan forces embroiled in that nation’s civil war. President Reagan continued to defend his actions throughout his two terms in office. During his farewell address in 1989, he claimed success in weakening the Sandinista government, forcing the Soviets to withdraw from Afghanistan, and bringing an end to the conflict in Angola. Domestic critics, however, decried his actions, claiming that the support of so-called “freedom fighters” resulted only in prolonging and escalating bloody conflicts and in U.S. support of repressive and undemocratic elements in each of the respective nations.

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• **Feb 07 1775 – American Revolution:** In London Benjamin Franklin publishes An Imaginary Speech in defense of American courage. Franklin’s speech was intended to counter an unnamed officer’s comments to Parliament that the British need not fear the colonial rebels, because “Americans are unequal to the People of this Country [Britain] in Devotion to Women, and in
Courage, and worse than all, they are religious.” Franklin responded to the three-pronged critique with his usual wit and acuity. Noting that the colonial population had increased while the British population had declined, Franklin concluded that American men must therefore be more “effectually devoted to the Fair Sex” than their British brethren.

- Feb 07 1862 – Civil War: *Confederates order reinforcements to Fort Donelson* » One day after the fall of Fort Henry on the Tennessee River, Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston, commander of Rebel forces in the West, orders 15,000 reinforcements to Fort Donelson. This fort lay on the Cumberland River just a few miles from Fort Henry. Johnston’s decision turned out to be a mistake, as many of the troops were captured when the Fort Donelson fell to the Yankees on 16 FEB.

During the fall and winter of 1861 to 1862, the Union Army and Navy penetrated through Kentucky and into Tennessee. Led by General Ulysses S. Grant, the Yankees were gaining crucial advantages by controlling parts of the major rivers in the upper South. Johnston sought to stop the bleeding of lost Confederate territory by strengthening the garrison inside Fort Donelson. In retrospect, his mistake was in not providing enough support to Donelson. Johnston wanted to buy time so he could gather his forces from eastern Kentucky and Tennessee to Nashville, which lay south and east of Fort Donelson. If Johnston had concentrated his force at Donelson, he would have had a significant advantage over Grant. Instead, Grant surrounded the fort and sent a squadron to attack from the river. On February 16, 1862, the Yankees cut off the fort from the south and forced the surrender of 15,000 Confederates.

After the fall of Fort Donelson, Johnston gathered his remaining forces to northern Mississippi. On April 6, 1862, at the Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee, the Western armies clashed in one of the most destructive battles of the war. Johnston was killed in the Confederate defeat.

- Feb 07 1915 – WWI: In a blinding snowstorm, General Fritz von Below and Germany’s Eighth Army launch a surprise attack against the Russian lines just north of the Masurian Lakes on the Eastern Front, beginning the Winter Battle of the Masurian Lakes (also known as the Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes). The Russians suffered 56,000 casualties in the Winter Battle; an estimated 100,000 more had been taken prisoner. German losses were comparatively small, though many German troops suffered from exposure due to the extreme cold.
- **Feb 07 1943 – WW2**: Imperial Japanese naval forces complete the evacuation of 10,652 Imperial Japanese Army troops from Guadalcanal during Operation Ke, ending Japanese attempts to retake the island from Allied forces in the Guadalcanal Campaign.

- **Feb 07 1944 – WW2**: In Anzio, Italy, German forces launch a counteroffensive during the Allied Operation Shingle.

- **Feb 07 1951 - Korea**: Sancheong-Hamyang massacre: South Korean Army 11th Division killed 705 unarmed citizens in Sancheong and Hamyang, South Gyeongsang district of South Korea. The victims were civilians and 85% of them were women, children and elderly people.

- **Feb 07 1965 – Vietnam War**: *U.S. jets conduct retaliatory raids* As part of Operation Flaming Dart, 49 U.S. Navy jets from the 7th Fleet carriers Coral Sea and Hancock drop bombs and rockets on the barracks and staging areas at Dong Hoi, a guerrilla training camp in North Vietnam. Escorted by U.S. jets, a follow-up raid by South Vietnamese planes bombed a North Vietnamese military communications center.

  These strikes were in retaliation for communist attacks on the U.S. installation at Camp Holloway and the adjacent Pleiku airfield in the Central Highlands, which killed eight U.S. servicemen, wounded 109, and destroyed or damaged 20 aircraft.

  Even before the attack, presidential advisors John T. McNaughton and McGeorge Bundy had favored bombing North Vietnam. After the attack in the Central Highlands, they strongly urged President Johnson to order the retaliatory raids. Johnson agreed and gave the order to commence Operation Flaming Dart, hoping that a quick and effective retaliation would persuade the North Vietnamese to cease their attacks in South Vietnam.

  Bundy, who had just returned from Vietnam, defended the air raids as “right and necessary.” Senate Majority Leader Mansfield (D-MT) and GOP leader Everett Dirksen (Illinois) supported the president’s decision, but Senators Wayne Morse (D-Oregon) and Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska) attacked the action as a dangerous escalation of the war.

  The retaliatory raids did not have the desired effect. On 10 FEB, the Viet Cong struck again, this time at an American installation in Qui Nhon, killing 23 Americans. Johnson quickly ordered another retaliatory strike, Flaming Dart II.
• **Feb 07 1968 – Vietnam War:** North Vietnamese use 11 Soviet–built light tanks to overrun the U.S. Special Forces camp at Lang Vei at the end of an 18–hour long siege. Casualties and losses: NVA 310 - US/ARVN/KOL 534.

• **Feb 07 1971 – Vietnam War:** *Operation Dewey Canyon II ends* » Although ended, U.S. units continue to provide support for South Vietnamese army operations in Laos. Operation Dewey Canyon II began on 30 JAN as the initial phase of Lam Son 719, the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos that was to commence on 8 FEB. The purpose of the South Vietnamese operation was to interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail, advance to Tchepone in Laos, and destroy the North Vietnamese supply dumps in the area.

In Dewey Canyon II, the vanguard of the U.S. 1st Brigade, 5th Infantry Division, an armored cavalry/engineer task force, cleared the road from Vandegrift Combat Base (southwest of Cam Lo in the region south of the DMZ) along highway Route 9 toward Khe Sanh. The area was cleared so that 20,000 South Vietnamese troops could reoccupy 1,000 square miles of territory in northwest South Vietnam and mass at the Laotian border in preparation for the invasion of Laos. In accordance with a U.S. congressional ban, U.S. ground forces were not to enter Laos. Instead, the only direct U.S. support permitted was long-range cross-border artillery fire, fixed-wind air strikes, and 2,600 helicopters to airlift Saigon troops and supplies.

• **Feb 07 1971 – Post WW2:** Dr. Josef Mengele, the infamous Nazi doctor who performed medical experiments at the Auschwitz death camps, dies of a stroke while swimming in Brazil—although his death was not verified until 1985.

• **Feb 07 1984 – Aviation:** *First human satellite* » While in orbit 170 miles above Earth, Navy Captain Bruce McCandless becomes the first human being to fly untethered in space when he exits the U.S. space shuttle *Challenger* and maneuvers freely, using a bulky white rocket pack of his own design. McCandless orbited Earth in tangent with the shuttle at speeds greater than 17,500 miles per hour and flew up to 320 feet away from the *Challenger*. After an hour and a half testing and flying the jet-powered backpack and admiring Earth, McCandless safely reentered the shuttle.
Later that day, Army Lieutenant Colonel Robert Stewart tried out the rocket pack, which was a device regarded as an important step toward future operations to repair and service orbiting satellites and to assemble and maintain large space stations. It was the fourth orbital mission of the space shuttle *Challenger*.

- **Feb 07 1990 – Cold War:** Soviet Communist Party gives up monopoly on political power » The Central Committee of the Soviet Union’s Communist Party agrees to endorse President Mikhail Gorbachev’s recommendation that the party give up its 70-year long monopoly of political power. The Committee’s decision to allow political challenges to the party’s dominance in Russia was yet another signal of the impending collapse of the Soviet system.

At the end of three days of extremely stormy meetings dealing with economic and political reforms in the Soviet Union, the Central Committee announced that it was endorsing the idea that the Soviet Communist Party should make “no claim for any particular role to be encoded in the Constitution” that was currently being rewritten. The proposal was but one of many made by President Gorbachev during the meetings. Critics of Gorbachev’s plan charged that dissipating the Communist Party’s power would erode the gains made since the Bolshevik Revolution and would weaken the international stature of the Soviet Union. Supporters, however, carried the day—they noted the impatience of the Soviet people with the slow pace of change and the general pessimism about the crumbling economy under communist rule. As one Communist Party official noted, “Society itself will decide whether it wishes to adopt our politics.” However, he was also quick to add that the move by the Central Committee did not mean that the Communist Party was removing itself from public affairs. Many foreign observers stressed that even in a new pluralistic political system in Russia, the well-established party would have immense advantages over any challengers.

The response from the United States was surprise and cautious optimism. One State Department official commented that, “The whole Soviet world is going down the drainpipe with astonishing speed. It’s mind-boggling.” Former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger indicated that he was “personally gratified and astonished that anyone would have the chance to say such things in Moscow without being shot.” President George Bush was more circumspect, merely congratulating President Gorbachev for his “restraint and finesse.”

Ironically, the fact that the Communist Party was willing to accept political challenges to its authority indicated how desperately it was trying to maintain its weakening power over the country. The measures were little help, however—President Gorbachev resigned on December 25, 1991 and the Soviet Union officially ceased to exist on December 31, 1991.
Feb 08 1777 – American Revolution:  Former POW Timothy Bigelow is named colonel » Just six months after his release as a prisoner-of-war, Major Timothy Bigelow becomes colonel of the 15th Massachusetts Colonial Line of the Continental Army on this day in 1777.

Bigelow, a blacksmith who was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, on August 12, 1739, began his Patriot involvement when he, upon learning of the Battle of Lexington, took a body of Minutemen to Cambridge. Later, he was one of two majors to march with Benedict Arnold and his freezing, starving, ailing men through Maine to Canada. In December 1775, the British captured Bigelow and took him prisoner at the Battle of Quebec. He remained in British captivity until August 1776.

After his promotion to colonel, Bigelow fought valiantly in some of the most important battles of the Revolutionary War, including the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777, the Battle of Monmouth in June 1778 and the Battle of Yorktown in October 1781. After leaving his command in the army, Bigelow returned home to Worcester, Massachusetts, where he fell into financial ruin and was jailed for failure to repay his debts. Bigelow died in prison on March 31, 1790; he was survived by a wife and five children.

Bigelow’s death in debtors’ prison remains a mystery, as his wife was the heiress to a large fortune and Bigelow himself had garnered title to 23,000 acres in Vermont for his military service. However, his wife and namesake son had moved to Groton, Connecticut, before his death. The son, a Harvard graduate, became an acclaimed attorney, Freemason and Federalist politician. A monument dedicated to Bigelow is located at Worcester Common in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Feb 08 1790 – American Revolution:  President George Washington delivers first State of the Union » Washington began by congratulating Congress assembled in New York City on the present favorable prospects of our public affairs, most notable of which was North Carolina’s recent decision to join the federal republic. North Carolina had rejected the Constitution in July 1788 because it lacked a bill of rights. Under the terms of the Constitution, the new government acceded to power after only 11 of the 13 states accepted the document. By the time North Carolina ratified in November 1789, the first Congress had met, written the Bill of Rights and dispatched them for review by the states. When Washington spoke in January, it seemed likely the people of the United States would stand behind Washington’s government and enjoy the concord, peace, and plenty he saw as symbols of the nation’s good fortune.
Washington’s address gave a brief, but excellent, outline of his administration’s policies as designed by Alexander Hamilton. The former commander in chief of the Continental Army argued in favor of securing the common defense, as he believed preparedness for war to be one of the most effectual means of preserving peace. Washington’s guarded language allowed him to hint at his support for the controversial idea of creating a standing army without making an overt request.

The most basic functions of day-to-day governing had yet to be organized, and Washington charged Congress with creating a competent fund designated for defraying the expenses incident to the conduct of our foreign affairs, a uniform rule of naturalization, and Uniformity in the Currency, Weights and Measures of the United States.

After covering the clearly federal issues of national defense and foreign affairs, Washington urged federal influence over domestic issues as well. The strongly Hamilton-influenced administration desired money for and some measure of control over Agriculture, Commerce and Manufactures as well as Science and Literature. These national goals required a Federal Post-Office and Post-Roads and a means of public education, which the president justified as a means to secure the Constitution, by educating future public servants in the republican principles of representative government.

- **Feb 08 1862– Civil War:** *Battle of Roanoke Island* » Union General Ambrose Burnside scores a major victory when his troops capture Roanoke Island in North Carolina. It was one of the first major Union victories of the Civil War and gave the Yankees control of the mouth of Albemarle Sound, allowing them to threaten the Rebel capital of Richmond, Virginia, from the south.

During the war’s first winter, Union strategists focused their efforts on capturing coastal defenses to deny the Confederates sea outlets. In August 1861, the Yankees took two key forts on North Carolina’s Outer Banks, paving the way for the campaign against Roanoke Island. On January 11, 1862, Burnside took a force of 15,000 soldiers and a flotilla of 80 ships down to the Outer Banks. The expeditionary force arrived at Hatteras Inlet on January 13, but poor weather delayed an attack for three weeks. On February 7, Burnside landed 10,000 troops on the island. They were met by about 2,500 Confederates. Burnside attacked, and his force overwhelmed the outer defenses of the island. Confederate commander Colonel Henry Shaw retreated to the north end of the island but had no chance to escape. On February 8, Shaw surrendered his entire force.

The Yankees suffered 37 men killed and 214 wounded, while the Confederates lost 23 men killed and 62 wounded before the surrender. The Union now controlled a vital section of the coast. The victory came two days after Union General Ulysses S. Grant captured Fort Henry in northern Tennessee, and, for the first time in the war, the North had reason for optimism.
Feb 08 1904 – Russia*Japan: The Russo-Japanese War begins » Following the Russian rejection of a Japanese plan to divide Manchuria and Korea into spheres of influence, Japan launches a surprise naval attack against Port Arthur, a Russian naval base in China. The Russian fleet was decimated.

During the subsequent Russo-Japanese War, Japan won a series of decisive victories over the Russians, who underestimated the military potential of its non-Western opponent. In January 1905, the strategic naval base of Port Arthur fell to Japanese naval forces under Admiral Heihachiro Togo; in March, Russian troops were defeated at Shenyang, China, by Japanese Field Marshal Iwao Oyama; and in May, the Russian Baltic fleet under Admiral Zinovi Rozhdestvenski was destroyed by Togo near the Tsushima Islands.

These three major defeats convinced Russia that further resistance against Japan’s imperial designs for East Asia was hopeless, and in August 1905 U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt mediated a peace treaty at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. (He was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for this achievement.) Japan emerged from the conflict as the first modern non-Western world power and set its sights on greater imperial expansion. However, for Russia, its military’s disastrous performance in the war was one of the immediate causes of the Russian Revolution of 1905.

Feb 08 1918 – WWI: The United States Army resumes publication of the military newsletter Stars and Stripes. Begun as a newsletter for Union soldiers during the American Civil War, Stars and Stripes was published weekly during World War I from February 8, 1918, until June 13, 1919.

Feb 08 1942 – WW2: Japan invades Singapore.

Feb 08 1943 – WW2: Americans secure Guadalcanal » Japanese troops evacuate Guadalcanal, leaving the island in Allied possession after a prolonged campaign. The American victory paved the way for other Allied wins in the Solomon Islands.

Guadalcanal is the largest of the Solomons, a group of 992 islands and atolls, 347 of which are inhabited, in the South Pacific Ocean. The Solomons, which are located northeast of Australia and have 87 indigenous languages, were discovered in 1568 by the Spanish navigator Alvaro de Mendana de Neyra (1541-95). In 1893, the British annexed Guadalcanal, along with the other central and southern Solomons. The Germans took control of the northern Solomons in 1885, but transferred these islands, except for Bougainville and Buka (which eventually went to the Australians) to the British in 1900.

The Japanese invaded the Solomons in 1942 during World War II and began building a strategic airfield on Guadalcanal. On August 7 of that year, U.S. Marines landed on the island, signaling the Allies’ first major offensive against Japanese-held positions in the Pacific. The Japanese responded quickly with sea and air attacks. A series of bloody battles ensued in the debilitating tropical heat as Marines sparred with Japanese troops on land, while in the waters surrounding Guadalcanal, the U.S.
Navy fought six major engagements with the Japanese between 24 AUG and 30 NOV. In mid-November 1942, the five Sullivan brothers from Waterloo, Iowa, died together when the Japanese sunk their ship, the USS Juneau.

Both sides suffered heavy losses of men, warships and planes in the battle for Guadalcanal. An estimated 1,600 U.S. troops were killed, over 4,000 were wounded and several thousand more died from disease. The Japanese lost 24,000 soldiers. On December 31, 1942, Emperor Hirohito told Japanese troops they could withdraw from the area; the Americans secured Guadalcanal about five weeks later.

The Solomons gained their independence from Britain in 1978. In the late 1990s, fighting broke out between rival ethnic groups on Guadalcanal and continued until an Australian-led international peacekeeping mission restored order in 2003. Today, with a population of over half a million people, the Solomons are known as a scuba diver and fisherman’s paradise.

- **Feb 08 1948 – Korea:** The formal creation of the Korean People's Army of North Korea is announced.

- **Feb 08 1948 – Cold War:** *Cardinal Mindszenty of Hungary sentenced:* Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty, the highest Catholic official in Hungary, is convicted of treason and sentenced to life imprisonment by the Communist People’s Court. Outraged observers in Western Europe and the United States condemned both the trial and Mindszenty’s conviction as “perversions” and “lynchings.”

  Mindszenty was no stranger to political persecution. During World War II, Hungary’s fascist government arrested him for his speeches denouncing the oppression of Jews in the nation. After the war, as a communist regime took power in Hungary, he continued his political work, decrying the political oppression and lack of religious freedom in his nation. In 1948, the Hungarian government arrested the cardinal. Mindszenty, several other Catholic Church officials, a journalist, a professor, and a member of the Hungarian royal family were all found guilty of various crimes during a brief trial before the Communist People’s Court in Budapest. Most had been charged with treason, trying to overthrow the Hungarian government, and speculation in foreign currency (illegally sending money out of the country). All but Mindszenty received prison sentences ranging from a few years to life.

  Mindszenty was the focus of the trial. During the proceedings, the prosecutors produced several documents implicating Mindszenty in antigovernment activities. The Cardinal admitted that he was “guilty in principle and in detail of most of the accusations made,” but he vigorously denied that his activities were designed to overthrow the Hungarian government. Nevertheless, he was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment.
The reaction to Mindszenty’s conviction was swift and indignant. British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin declared that the trial was an affront to Britain’s understanding of liberty and justice. The Vatican issued a statement proclaiming that the Cardinal was “morally and civilly innocent.” In the United States, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn (Democrat-Texas) stated that the “Christian world cannot help but be shocked over the verdict.” Protests were held in a number of U.S. cities, but the protests did not change the verdict.

The case was significant in demonstrating the depth of the anticommunist movement in Hungary. In 1956, Mindszenty was released when a reformist government took power in Hungary. Shortly thereafter, Soviet troops entered Hungary to put down anticommunist protests. Mindszenty took refuge in the U.S. embassy in Budapest and stayed inside the embassy grounds until 1971. That year he was recalled by the Vatican and settled in Vienna, where he died in 1975.


  Before MACV, the senior U.S. military command in South Vietnam was the U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG-Vietnam), which was formed on November 1, 1955 to provide military assistance to South Vietnam. MAAG-Vietnam had U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps elements that provided advice and assistance to the South Vietnamese Ministry of Defense, Joint General Staff and corps and division commanders, as well as to training centers and province and district headquarters.

  MAAG-Vietnam was disbanded in 1964 and its personnel and responsibilities absorbed by MACV. The establishment of MACV, which greatly enlarged and reorganized the advisory effort, represented a substantial increase in the U.S. commitment to the war in Vietnam, and American assistance to the South Vietnamese doubled between 1961 and 1962. Thereafter, the conduct of the war was directed by MACV and a major build-up of American advisers, support personnel, and eventually an escalation that included the commitment of U.S. combat troops began.

- **Feb 08 1971 – Vietnam War: Operation Lam Son 719 begins** » South Vietnamese army forces invade southern Laos. Dubbed Operation Lam Son 719, the mission goal was to disrupt the communist supply and infiltration network along Route 9 in Laos, adjacent to the two northern provinces of South Vietnam.

  The operation was supported by U.S. firepower (aviation and airlift) and artillery (firing across the border from firebases inside South Vietnam). Observers described the drive on North Vietnam’s
supply routes and depots as some of the bloodiest fighting of the war. Enemy resistance was initially light, as a 12,000-man spearhead of the South Vietnamese army thrust its way across the border into the communists’ deepest jungle stronghold—the town of Tchepone, a major enemy supply center on Route 9, was their major objective. However, resistance stiffened in the second week when the North Vietnamese rushed reinforcements to the area. During the last week of February, the big push bogged down about 16 miles from the border, after bloody fighting in which the communist troops overran two South Vietnamese army battalions. Casualties and losses: ARVN/US/KOL 22,121 - NVA/PLO 8339

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- Feb 09 1775 – American Revolution: British Parliament declares Massachusetts in rebellion.

- Feb 09 1862 – Civil War: A Union naval flotilla destroys the bulk of the Confederate Mosquito Fleet in the Battle of Elizabeth City on the Pasquotank River in North Carolina.

- Feb 09 1918 – Civil War: The first peace treaty of World War I is signed when the newly declared independent state of Ukraine officially comes to terms with the Central Powers at 2 a.m. in Berlin, Germany, on this day in 1918.

- Feb 09 1942 – WW2: The Normandie catches fire » The largest and most luxurious ocean liner on the seas at that time, France’s Normandie, catches fire while in the process of being converted for military use by the United States.

The Normandie, built in 1931, was the first ship to be constructed in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the 1929 Convention for Safety of Life at Sea. It was also enormous, measuring 1,029 feet long and 119 feet wide and displacing 85,000 tons of water. It offered passengers seven accommodation classes (including the new “tourist” class, as opposed to the old “third” class, commonly known as “steerage”) and 1,975 berths. It took a crew of more than 1,300 to work her. Despite its size, it was also fast: capable of 32.1 knots. The liner was launched in 1932 and made its first transatlantic crossing in 1935. In 1937, it was reconfigured with four-bladed propellers, which meant it could cross the Atlantic in less than four days.

When France surrendered to the Germans in June 1940, and the puppet Vichy regime was installed, the Normandie was in dock at New York City. The Navy immediately placed it in “protective custody,” since the U.S. government did not want a ship of such size and speed to fall into the hands of the Germans, which it certainly would if it returned to France. In November 1941, Time magazine ran an article stating that in the event of the United States’ involvement in the war, the Navy would seize the liner altogether and turn it into an aircraft carrier. It also elaborated on how the
design of the ship made such a conversion relatively simple. When the Navy did take control of the
ship, shortly after Pearl Harbor, it began the conversion of the liner— but to a troop ship, renamed the
USS Lafayette in honor of the French general who aided the American colonies in their original quest
for independence.

The Lafayette never served its new purpose, as it caught fire and capsized. Sabotage was originally
suspected, but the likely cause was sparks from a welder’s torch. Although the ship was finally
righted, the massive salvage operation cost $3,750,000 and the fire damage made any hope of
employing the vessel impossible. It was scrapped—literally chopped up for scrap metal—in 1946.

- **Feb 09 1942 – WW2:** Dwight D. Eisenhower and top United States military leaders hold their first
  formal meeting to discuss American military strategy in the war.

- **Feb 09 1943 – WW2:** Under the command of Major General Orde Wingate, the 77th Indian Brigade,
  also called the Chindits, launch guerrilla raids behind Japanese lines in Burma.

- **Feb 09 1943 – WW2:** Allied authorities declare Guadalcanal secure after Imperial Japan evacuates
  its remaining forces from the island, ending the Battle of Guadalcanal. Casualties and losses: Allies
  7104 - JP 32,000.

- **Feb 09 1950 – Cold War:** *McCarthy accuses State Department of communist infiltration*  » Joseph
  Raymond McCarthy, a relatively obscure Republican senator from Wisconsin, announces during a
  speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, that he has in his hand a list of 205 communists who have
  infiltrated the U.S. State Department. The unsubstantiated declaration, which was little more than a
  publicity stunt, suddenly thrust Senator McCarthy into the national spotlight.

  Asked to reveal the names on the list, the reckless and opportunistic senator named officials he
determined guilty by association, such as Owen Lattimore, an expert on Chinese culture and affairs
who had advised the State Department. McCarthy described Lattimore as the “top Russian spy” in
America.
These and other equally shocking accusations prompted the Senate to form a special committee, headed by Senator Millard Tydings of Maryland, to investigate the matter. The committee found little to substantiate McCarthy’s charges, but McCarthy nevertheless touched a nerve in the American public, and during the next two years he made increasingly sensational charges, even attacking President Harry S. Truman’s respected former secretary of state, George C. Marshall.

In 1953, a newly Republican Congress appointed McCarthy chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of Governmental Operations, and “McCarthyism” reached a fever pitch. In widely publicized hearings, McCarthy bullied defendants under cross-examination with unlawful and damaging accusations, destroying the reputations of hundreds of innocent citizens and officials.

In the early months of 1954, McCarthy, who had already lost the support of much of his party because of his bullying tactics, finally overreached himself when he took on the U.S. Army. Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower pushed for an investigation of McCarthy’s conduct, and the televised hearings exposed the senator as a reckless and excessive tyrant who never produced proper documentation for any of his charges. In December, the Senate voted to condemn him for misconduct. By the time of his death from alcoholism in 1957, the influence of Senator Joseph McCarthy in Congress was negligible.

- **Feb 09 1964 – U.S. Army**: The G.I. JOE action figure made its debut as an 11.5 inch "doll" for boys with 21 moving parts, named after the movie, The Story of G.I. JOE.

  ![Image](image_url)

- **Feb 09 1965 – Vietnam War**: *U.S. sends first combat troops to South Vietnam* » A U.S. Marine Corps Hawk air defense missile battalion is deployed to Da Nang. President Johnson had ordered this deployment to provide protection for the key U.S. airbase there.

  ![Image](image_url)

  This was the first commitment of American combat troops in South Vietnam and there was considerable reaction around the world to the new stage of U.S. involvement in the war. Predictably, both communist China and the Soviet Union threatened to intervene if the United States continued to apply its military might on behalf of the South Vietnamese. In Moscow, some 2,000 demonstrators, led by Vietnamese and Chinese students and clearly supported by the authorities, attacked the U.S. Embassy. Britain and Australia supported the U.S. action, but France called for negotiations.
**Feb 09 1972 – Vietnam War:** *USS Constellation arrives off coast of Vietnam*  »  The aircraft carrier USS Constellation joins aircraft carriers Coral Sea and Hancock off the coast of Vietnam. From 1964 to 1975, there were usually three U.S. carriers stationed in the water near Vietnam at any given time. Carrier aircraft participated in the bombing of North Vietnam and also provided close air support for U.S. and South Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam. In 1972, the number of U.S. carriers off Vietnam increased to seven as part of the U.S. reaction to the North Vietnamese Easteride Offensive that was launched on 30 MAR–carrier aircraft played a major role in the air operations that helped the South Vietnamese defeat the communist invasion.

**Feb 09 2001 – U.S. Navy:** *U.S. sub collides with Japanese fishing boat in Pearl Harbor*  »  A United States military submarine collides with a Japanese fishing boat in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, killing four students and five other people. The USS Greenville was hosting a cruise for VIPs at the time, some of whom were actually at the controls of the sub when the collision occurred.

Scott Waddle was the commander of the Greenville, a 7,000-ton nuclear submarine. As part of the Distinguished Visitor program, 16 civilians were on board the sub on the morning of February 9. The last maneuver that was to be shown to the VIPs was the Emergency Ballast Tank Blow that brings the submarine to the surface very quickly.

It was at this point that proper procedures broke down completely. Commander Waddle gave orders that could not be completed properly in the time assigned. Appropriate sonar and periscope sweeps to determine the safety of surfacing were not completed. In addition, the crew failed to communicate its intentions properly in part because civilians were sitting at the sub controls. It also failed to notice that the Ehime Maru, a Japanese fishing vessel, was above them on the surface.

The Greenville's rudder sliced right through the Ehime Maru's engine room as it rose to the surface. The fishing boat, used as a training vessel for high school students, was damaged so severely that it sank within 10 minutes. Nine people, including four students, drowned. A week later, the boat was found resting on the ocean floor 2,000 feet below the surface and was carried (still underwater) closer to the island of Oahu for salvage operations. Divers recovered eight bodies in October and, later, a memorial was established at Kakaako Park in Honolulu.

Despite the failures of Commander Waddle, Navy administrators did not pursue a court-martial. Waddle received only a reprimand and was allowed to keep his rank and pension. The Greenville went on to be involved in two other incidents the following year: In August, it ran aground in a Saipan port, and on January 27, 2002, it collided with the USS Ogden near Oman. Commanding officer David Bogdan was removed from duty following the Saipan incident but there were no disciplinary measures taken after the Ogden collision.
February 9, 2003 – Iraq: Six weeks before the Iraq War began, Secretary of State Colin Powell on ABC-TV's “This Week” dismissed the need for U.N. weapons inspectors to continue searching Iraq for weapons of mass destruction.

February 10, 1763 – French and Indian War: The Seven Years’ War, a global conflict known in America as the French and Indian War, ends with the signing of the Treaty of Paris by France, Great Britain, and Spain.

In the early 1750s, France’s expansion into the Ohio River valley repeatedly brought the country into armed conflict with the British colonies. In 1756, the British formally declared war against France. In the first year of the war, the British suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the French and their broad network of Native American alliances. However, in 1757, British Prime Minister William Pitt (the older) recognized the potential of imperial expansion that would come out of victory against the French and borrowed heavily to fund an expanded war effort. Pitt financed Prussia’s struggle against France and her allies in Europe and reimbursed the colonies for the raising of armies in North America. By 1760, the French had been expelled from Canada, and by 1763 all of France’s allies in Europe had either made a separate peace with Prussia or had been defeated. In addition, Spanish attempts to aid France in the Americas had failed, and France also suffered defeats against British forces in India.

The Seven Years’ War ended with the signing of the treaties of Hubertusburg and Paris in February 1763. In the Treaty of Paris, France lost all claims to Canada and gave Louisiana to Spain, while Britain received Spanish Florida, Upper Canada, and various French holdings overseas. The treaty ensured the colonial and maritime supremacy of Britain and strengthened the 13 American colonies by removing their European rivals to the north and the south. Fifteen years later, French bitterness over the loss of most of their colonial empire contributed to their intervention in the American Revolution on the side of the Patriots.

February 10, 1779 – American Revolution: The Battle of Carr’s Fort » A force of more than 340 men from the South Carolina and Georgia militias, led by Colonel Andrew Pickens of South Carolina with Colonel John Dooly and Lieutenant Colonel Elijah Clarke of Georgia, attack a group of approximately 200 Loyalists under the command of Colonel John Hamilton at Robert Carr’s Fort, in Wilkes County, Georgia.
After quickly taking the upper hand in the battle, the Patriots were on the brink of victory when they received word that the Loyalists would soon be getting assistance from several hundred reinforcements then marching to North Carolina to join the battle under the command of Colonel John Boyd, a South Carolina Loyalist. Boyd’s mission was to recruit colonists for the British army from behind Patriot lines. The Patriot commanders decided to abandon the siege at Carr’s Fort and surprise the approaching Loyalists under Boyd. The Patriots marched for four days, then successfully surprised and routed the Loyalists in the Battle of Kettle Creek, during which Boyd was mortally wounded.

Wilkes County, the site of both battles, was founded in 1777 and named in honor of John Wilkes, the radical British pamphleteer. Wilkes supporters, or Wilkites, constituted one quarter of the British population. They advocated for electoral reforms and publication of parliamentary debates. They also supported the American colonial protests of the late 1760s and early 1770s. The colonists responded with money for Wilkes’ legal defense and supportive pamphlets including a mock Apostle’s Creed beginning: I believe in Wilkes, the firm Patriot.

**Feb 10 1861 – Civil War: Davis learns he is president**  
Jefferson Davis, a former U.S. senator from Mississippi who served as U.S. secretary of war in the 1850s, received word he has been selected president of the new Confederate States of America. Delegates at the Confederacy’s constitutional convention in Montgomery, Alabama, chose him for the job.

Davis was at his plantation, Brierfield, pruning rose bushes with his wife Varina when a messenger arrived from nearby Vicksburg, Mississippi. The presidency was not a position Davis wanted, but he accepted it out of a sense of duty to his new country. Varina later wrote of her husband’s reaction to the news: “Reading that telegram he looked so grieved that I feared some evil had befallen our family. After a few minutes he told me like a man might speak of a sentence of death.”

Davis said of the job: “I have no confidence in my ability to meet its requirement. I think I could perform the function of a general.” He could see the difficulties involved in launching the new nation. “Upon my weary heart was showered smiles, plaudits, and flowers, but beyond them I saw troubles innumerable. We are without machinery, without means, and threatened by powerful opposition but I do not despond and will not shrink from the task before me.”

Davis was prescient in his concerns, and drew sharp criticism during the Civil War. Alexander Stephens, the vice president, said Davis was “weak and vacillating, timid, petulant, peevish, obstinate.” Davis remained president of the Confederacy until its government was dissolved on May
5, 1865. Less than a week later, he was captured by the Union and jailed for two years. He died at age 81 in New Orleans in 1889.

- **Feb 10 1916 – WWI**: As a result of bitter disagreements with President Woodrow Wilson over America’s national defense strategies, Lindley M. Garrison resigns his position as the United States secretary of war.

- **Feb 10 1942 – WW2**: A Japanese submarine launches a brutal attack on Midway, a coral atoll used as a U.S. Navy base. It was the fourth bombing of the atoll by Japanese ships since December.


- **Feb 10 1962 – Cold War**: *Spies swapped* » American spy pilot Francis Gary Powers is released by the Soviets in exchange for Soviet Colonel Rudolf Abel, a senior KGB spy who was caught in the United States five years earlier. The two men were brought to separate sides of the Glienicker Bridge, which connects East and West Berlin across Lake Wannsee. As the spies waited, negotiators talked in the center of the bridge where a white line divided East from West. Finally, Powers and Abel were waved forward and crossed the border into freedom at the same moment—8:52 a.m., Berlin time. Just before their transfer, Frederic Pryor—an American student held by East German authorities since August 1961—was released to American authorities at another border checkpoint.

  In 1957, Reino Hayhanen, a lieutenant colonel in the KGB, walked into the American embassy in Paris and announced his intention to defect to the West. Hayhanen had proved a poor spy during his five years in the United States and was being recalled to the USSR, where he feared he would be disciplined. In exchange for asylum, he promised CIA agents he could help expose a major Soviet spy network in the United States and identify its director. The CIA turned Hayhanen over to the FBI to investigate the claims.
During the Cold War, Soviet spies worked together in the United States without revealing their names or addresses to each other, a precaution in the event that one was caught or, like Hayhanen, defected. Thus, Hayhanen initially provided the FBI with little useful information. He did, however, remember being taken to a storage room in Brooklyn by his superior, whom he knew as “Mark.” The FBI tracked down the storage room and found it was rented by one Emil R. Goldfus, an artist and photographer who had a studio in Brooklyn Heights.

Emil Goldfus was Rudolf Ivanovich Abel, a brilliant Soviet spy who was fluent in at least five languages and an expert at the technical requirements of espionage. After decorated service as an intelligence operative during World War II, Abel assumed a false identity and entered an East German refugee camp where he successfully applied for the right to immigrate to Canada. In 1948, he slipped across the Canadian border into the United States, where he set about reorganizing the Soviet spy network.

After learning of Hayhanen’s defection, Abel fled to Florida, where he remained underground until June, when he felt it was safe to return to New York. On June 21, 1957, he was arrested in Manhattan’s Latham Hotel. In his studio, FBI investigators found a hollow pencil used for concealing messages, a shaving brush containing microfilm, a code book, and radio transmitting equipment. He was tried in a federal court in Brooklyn and in October was found guilty on three counts of espionage and sentenced to 30 years imprisonment. He was sent to the federal penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia.

Less than three years later, on May 1, 1960, Francis Gary Powers took off from Peshawar, Pakistan, at the controls of an ultra-sophisticated Lockheed U-2 high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft. Powers, a CIA-employed pilot, was to fly over some 2,000 miles of Soviet territory to Bodo military airfield in Norway, collecting intelligence information en route. Roughly halfway through his journey, he was shot down over Sverdlovsk in the Urals. Forced to bail out at 15,000 feet, he survived the parachute jump but was promptly arrested by Soviet authorities.

On 5 MAY, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev announced that the American spy aircraft had been shot down and two days later revealed that Powers was alive and well and had confessed to being on an intelligence mission for the CIA. On 7 MAY, the United States acknowledged that the U-2 had probably flown over Soviet territory but denied that it had authorized the mission. On 16 MAY, leaders of the United States, the USSR, Britain, and France met in Paris for a long-awaited summit meeting. The four powers were to discuss tensions in the two Germanys and negotiate new disarmament treaties. However, at the first session, the summit collapsed after President Dwight D. Eisenhower refused to apologize to Khrushchev for the U-2 incident. Khrushchev also canceled an invitation for Eisenhower to visit the USSR.

In August, Powers pleaded guilty to espionage charges in Moscow and was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment—three in prison and seven in a prison colony. At the end of his 1957 trial, Rudolf Abel
escaped the death penalty when his lawyer, James Donovan, convinced the federal judge that Abel might one day be used either as a source of intelligence information or as a hostage to be traded with the Soviets for a captured U.S. agent. In his five years in prison, Abel kept his silence, but the latter prophecy came true in 1962 when he was exchanged for Powers in Berlin. Donovan had played an important role in the negotiations that led to the swap.

Upon returning to the United States, Powers was cleared by the CIA and the Senate of any personal blame for the U-2 incident. In 1970, he published a book, Operation Overflight, about the incident and in 1977 was killed in the crash of a helicopter that he flew as a reporter for a Los Angeles television station. Abel returned to Moscow, where he was forced into retirement by the KGB, who feared that during his five years of captivity U.S. authorities had convinced him to become a double agent. He was given a modest pension and in 1968 published KGB-approved memoirs. He died in 1971.

- **Feb 10 1965 – Vietnam War:** Viet Cong blow up U.S. barracks » Viet Cong guerrillas 75 miles east of Pleiku on the central coast blow up the U.S. barracks at Qui Nhon, with a 100-pound explosive charge under the building. A total of 23 U.S. personnel were killed, as well as two Viet Cong. In response to the attack, President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered a retaliatory air strike operation on North Vietnam called Flaming Dart II.

  ![Image](image_url)

  This was the second in a series of retaliations launched because of communist attacks on U.S. installations in South Vietnam. Just 48 hours before, the Viet Cong struck Camp Holloway and the adjacent Pleiku airfield in the Central Highlands. This attack killed eight U.S. servicemen, wounded 109, and destroyed or damaged 20 aircraft. With his advisors advocating a strong response, President Johnson gave the order to launch Operation Flaming Dart, retaliatory air raids on a barracks and staging areas at Dong Hoi, a guerrilla training camp 40 miles north of the 17th parallel in North Vietnam.

  Johnson hoped that quick and effective retaliation would persuade the North Vietnamese to cease their attacks in South Vietnam. Unfortunately, Operation Flaming Dart did not have the desired effect. The attack on Qui Nhon was only the latest in a series of communist attacks on U.S. installations, and Flaming Dart II had very little effect.

- **Feb 10 1971 – Vietnam War:** Journalists killed in helicopter crash » Four journalists, including photographer Larry Burrows of Life magazine, Kent Potter of United Press International, Nenri Huett of the Associated Press, and Keisaburo Shimamoto of Newsweek, die in a South Vietnamese
helicopter operating in Laos. The journalists had been covering Operation Lam Son 719, a limited attack into Laos by South Vietnamese forces, when their helicopter crashed.

Vietnam was one of the most reported conflicts in the history of warfare. In 1964, when the massive American buildup began, there were roughly 40 U.S. and foreign journalists in Saigon. By August 1966, there were over 400 news media representatives in South Vietnam from 22 nations. The Vietnam War correspondents in the field shared the same dangers that confronted the front-line troops, risking their lives to witness and report the realities of the battlefield. Sixteen Americans lost their lives while covering the war. American journalists are among the 42 U.S. civilians still missing in action and unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, including NBC News correspondent Welles Hangen and Time photographer Sean Flynn, both of whom disappeared while covering the war in Cambodia.

- Feb 10 2003 – Iraq: Iraq acceded to U-2 surveillance flights over its territory, meeting a key demand by U.N. inspectors searching for banned weapons of mass destruction (WMD) there.


On a cold, rainy morning, Lincoln boarded a two-car private train loaded with his family’s belongings, which he himself had packed and bound. His wife, Mary Lincoln, was in St. Louis on a shopping trip, and joined him later in Indiana. It was a somber occasion. Lincoln was leaving his home and heading into the maw of national crisis. Since he had been elected, seven Southern states had seceded from the Union. Lincoln knew that his actions upon entering office would likely lead to civil war. He spoke to a crowd before departing: “Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young man to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being…I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail… To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.”

A bystander reported that the president-elect’s “breast heaved with emotion and he could scarcely command his feelings.” Indeed, Lincoln’s words were prophetic—a funeral train carried him back to Springfield just over four years later.
• **Feb 11 1862 - Civil War:** General Ulysses S. Grant commences the 6 day Battle of Fort Donelson, Tennessee.

• **Feb 11 1938 – Pre WWII:** Japan refuses to reveal naval data requested by the U.S. and Britain.

• **Feb 11 1942 – WW2:** USS Shark (SS–174) sunk by Japanese destroyer Yamakaze; Makassar Strait, 120 miles east of Menado, Celebes. 59 killed.

• **Feb 11 1942 – WW2:** The “Channel Dash”» The German battleships Gneisenau and Scharnhorst, as well as the heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen, escape from the French port of Brest and make a mad dash up the English Channel to safety in German waters.

  The Gneisenau and Scharnhorst had been anchored at Brest since March 1941. The Prinz Eugen had been tied to the French port since the Bismarck sortie in May 1941, when it and the battleship Bismarck made their own mad dash through the Atlantic and the Denmark Strait to elude Royal Navy gunfire. All three were subject to periodic bombing raids—and damage—by the British, as the Brits attempted to ensure that the German warships never left the French coast. But despite the careful watch of British subs and aircraft, German Vice Admiral Otto Ciliax launched Operation Cerberus to lead the ships out of the French port.

  The Germans, who had controlled and occupied France since June 1940, drew British fire deliberately, and the Gneisenau, Scharnhorst, and Prinz Eugen used the resulting skirmish as a defensive smoke screen. Six German destroyers and 21 torpedo boats accompanied the ships for protection as they moved north late on the night of February 11.

  In the morning, German planes provided air cover as well; ace pilot Adolf Galland led 250 other fighters in an unusually well-coordinated joint effort of the German navy and Luftwaffe. The British Royal Air Force also coordinated its attack with the Royal Navy Swordfish squadron, but a late start—the RAF did not realize until the afternoon of 12 FEB that the German squadron had pushed out to sea—and bad weather hindered their effort. All three German warships made it to a German port on February 13, although the Gneisenau and Scharnhorst had been damaged by British mines along the way.

  The British lost 40 aircraft and six Navy Swordfish in the confrontation, while the Germans lost a torpedo boat and 17 aircraft. The “Channel Dash,” as it came to be called, was extremely embarrassing to the British, as it happened right under their noses. They would get revenge of a sort, though: British warships sunk the Scharnhorst in December 1944 as the German ship attempted to attack a Russian convoy. The Gneisenau was destroyed in a bombing raid while still in port undergoing repairs, and the Prinz Eugen survived the war, but was taken over by the U.S. Navy at war’s end.

• **Feb 11 1943 – WW2:** General Dwight Eisenhower is selected to command the allied armies in Europe.
Feb 11 1945 – WW2: Yalta Conference ends » A week of intensive bargaining by the leaders of the three major Allied powers ends in Yalta, a Soviet resort town on the Black Sea. It was the second conference of the “Big Three” Allied leaders—U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin—and the war had progressed mightily since their last meeting, which had taken place in Tehran in late 1943.

What was then called the Crimea conference was held at the old summer palace of Czar Nicholas II on the outskirts of Yalta, now a city in the independent Ukraine. With victory over Germany three months away, Churchill and Stalin were more intent on dividing Europe into zones of political influence than in addressing military considerations. Germany would be divided into four zones of occupation administered by the three major powers and France and was to be thoroughly demilitarized and its war criminals brought to trial. The Soviets were to administer those European countries they liberated but promised to hold free elections. The British and Americans would oversee the transition to democracy in countries such as Italy, Austria, and Greece. Final plans were made for the establishment of the United Nations, and a charter conference was scheduled to begin in San Francisco in April.

A frail President Roosevelt, two months from his death, concentrated his efforts on gaining Soviet support for the U.S. war effort against Japan. The secret U.S. atomic bomb project had not yet tested a weapon, and it was estimated that an amphibious attack against Japan could cost hundreds of thousands of American lives. After being assured of an occupation zone in Korea, and possession of Sakhalin Island and other territories historically disputed between Russia and Japan, Stalin agreed to enter the Pacific War within two to three months of Germany’s surrender.

Most of the Yalta accords remained secret until after World War II, and the items that were revealed, such as Allied plans for Germany and the United Nations, were generally applauded. Roosevelt returned to the United States exhausted, and when he went to address the U.S. Congress on Yalta he was no longer strong enough to stand with the support of braces. In that speech, he called the conference “a turning point, I hope, in our history, and therefore in the history of the world.” He would not live long enough, however, to see the iron curtain drop along the lines of division laid out at Yalta. In April, he traveled to his cottage in Warm Springs, Georgia, to rest and on 12 APR died of a cerebral hemorrhage.

On 16 JUL, the United States successfully tested an atomic bomb in the New Mexico desert. On 6 AUG, it dropped one of these deadly weapons on Hiroshima, Japan. Two days later, true to its pledge at Yalta, the Soviet Union declared war against Japan. The next day, the United States dropped another atomic bomb on Nagasaki, and the Soviets launched a massive offensive against the Japanese
in Manchuria. On 15 AUG, the combination of the U.S. atomic attacks and the Soviet offensive forced a Japanese surrender. At the end of the month, U.S. troops landed in Japan unopposed.

When the full text of the Yalta agreements were released in the years following World War II, many criticized Roosevelt and Churchill for delivering Eastern Europe and North Korea into communist domination by conceding too much to Stalin at Yalta. The Soviets never allowed free elections in postwar Eastern Europe, and communist North Korea was sharply divided from its southern neighbor.

Eastern Europe, liberated and occupied by the Red Army, would have become Soviet satellites regardless of what had happened at Yalta. Because of the atomic bomb, however, Soviet assistance was not needed to defeat the Japanese. Without the Soviet invasion of the Japanese Empire in the last days of World War II, North Korea and various other Japanese-held territories that fell under Soviet control undoubtedly would have come under the sway of the United States. At Yalta, however, Roosevelt had no guarantee that the atomic bomb would work, and so he sought Soviet assistance in what was predicted to be the costly task of subduing Japan. Stalin, more willing than Roosevelt to sacrifice troops in the hope of territorial gains, happily accommodated his American ally, and by the end of the war had considerably increased Soviet influence in East Asia.

- **Feb 11 1956 – Cold War: Burgess and Maclean resurface** » Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess, former members of the British Foreign Office who had disappeared from England in 1951, resurface in Moscow. Their surprise appearance and formal statement to the press put an end to one of the most intriguing mysteries of the early Cold War.

Maclean and Burgess had been senior officials in the British Foreign Office and in 1951, they seemed to disappear without a trace. There were rumors that they had been spies for the Soviet Union and had left England to avoid prosecution. For five years, nothing was heard of the pair. British intelligence suspected that they were in the Soviet Union, but Russian officials consistently denied any knowledge of their whereabouts.

On February 11, 1956, the pair invited a group of journalists to a hotel room in Moscow. Burgess and Maclean were there to greet them, give a brief interview, and hand out a typed joint statement. In the statement, both men denied having served as Soviet spies. However, they very strongly declared their sympathy with the Soviet Union and stated that they had both been “increasingly alarmed by the post-war character of Anglo-American policy.” They claimed that the decision to leave England and live in Russia was due to their belief that only in Russia would there be “some chance of putting into practice in some form the convictions they had always had.” They were convinced that the Soviet
Union desired a policy of “mutual understanding” with the West, but that many officials in the United States and Great Britain were adamant in their opposition to any working relationship with the Russians. They concluded by stating, “Our life in the Soviet Union convinced us we took at the time the correct decision.”

While the surprise news conference solved the mystery of where Burgess and Maclean had been for the past five years, it did little to settle the question of why they had gone to the Soviet Union in the first place. Their statement also did not clear up the issue of whether or not they had spied for the Soviet Union. Evidence from both British and American intelligence agencies strongly suggested that the two, together with fellow Foreign Office workers Kim Philby and Sir Anthony Blunt, had engaged in espionage for the Russians. Both men spent the rest of their lives in the Soviet Union. Burgess died in 1963 and Maclean passed away in 1983.

- Feb 11 1962 – Vietnam War: *Farm Gate aircraft crashes* » Nine U.S. and South Vietnamese crewmen are killed in a SC-47 crash about 70 miles north of Saigon. The aircraft was part of Operation Farm Gate, a mission that had initially been designed to provide advisory support in assisting the South Vietnamese Air Force to increase its capability. In December, President John F. Kennedy expanded the Farm Gate mission to include limited combat missions by the U.S. Air Force pilots in support of South Vietnamese ground forces—the downed aircraft was part of this expanded effort.

By late 1962, communist activity and combat intensity had increased so much that President Kennedy ordered a further expansion of Farm Gate. In early 1963, additional aircraft arrived and new detachments were established at Pleiku and Soc Trang. Farm Gate was upgraded in early 1964 and then again in October 1965 when 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 South Vietnamese army. With the buildup of U.S. combat forces in South Vietnam and the increase in an 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, and from there they launched missions against the North Vietnamese in Laos.

- Feb 11 1970 – Aviation: The world’s fourth space power » From the Kagoshima Space Center on the east coast of Japan’s Ohsumi Peninsula, Ohsumi, Japan’s first satellite, is successfully launched into an orbit around Earth. The achievement made Japan the world’s fourth space power, after the Soviet Union in 1957, the United States in 1958, and France in 1965. Two months after Japan’s launching of Ohsumi, China became the world’s fifth space power when it successfully launched Mao 1 into space. The satellite, named after Mao Zedong, the leader of communist China, orbited Earth broadcasting the Chinese patriotic song *The East Is Red* once a minute.


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Feb 12 1915 – WWI: One of the biggest air raids of the war occurs when 34 planes from the British Naval Wing attack the German-occupied coastal towns of Blankenberge, Ostend and Zeebrugge in Belgium.

Feb 12 1917 – WWI: The Austrian submarine U-35 bombs and sinks the American schooner Lyman M. Law in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Cagliari, Sardinia. The Lyman M. Law had embarked on its final journey from Stockton, Maine, with a crew of 10 on January 6, 1917, carrying a cargo of 60,000 bundles of lemon-box staves.

Feb 12 1919 – WWI: Leaders of the Big Four nations meet for the first time in Paris. The day after British Prime Minister David Lloyd George’s arrival in Paris, he meets with representatives from the other Big Four nations—Prime Ministers Georges Clemenceau of France and Vittorio Orlando of Italy and President Woodrow Wilson of the United States—at the French Foreign Ministry on the Quai d’Orsay, for the first of what will be more than 100 meetings.

Victors of the Great War, the leaders of these four nations were determined to control the agenda of the conference that would decide its peace terms. There was no precedent for such a momentous peace conference; even the Congress of Vienna of 1815, which had preserved order in Europe for almost a century before collapsing in 1914, had been far smaller and less complicated than the gathering at Versailles.

As soon as Wilson arrived in Europe in mid-December (in the first-ever official visit to the continent by a U.S. president), Clemenceau and Lloyd George convinced him of the need for the Allies to establish their own position on the peace terms before beginning the general conference and sitting down with the enemy. In a break with traditional diplomacy, Germany was not invited to this preliminary round of talks. This made Wilson nervous, as he feared—understandably, as it turned out—that the Allies would end up setting the majority of the terms of the peace before the general conference even began, an eventuality that would surely frustrate and anger the Germans and would damage the ideal 12 JAN also failed to include representatives from the smaller allies or any neutral countries, though at the wishes of Britain, Japan later joined the group, which became known as the Supreme Council. The Council met daily, sometimes two or three times a day, knowing that the eyes of the world were on them. Even after the general conference began on 18 JAN—a day chosen to rankle the Germans, as it was the anniversary of the coronation of Kaiser Wilhelm I as ruler of a new, united Germany in 1871—the smaller group continued to meet separately to hash out the crucial questions of the peace settlement.

Feb 12 1941 – WW2: German General Erwin Rommel arrives in Tripoli, Libya, with the newly formed Afrika Korps, to reinforce the beleaguered Italians’ position.

Feb 12 1942 – WW2: Roosevelt (re)creates the National War Labor Board. The President reinstates Woodrow Wilson’s National War Labor Board (NWLB) in an attempt to forestall labor-
management conflict during World War II. Engaged in a two-front war, the United States was supplying not only its own military but those of the other Allies as well. Roosevelt wanted to prevent potential labor union strikes, which would slow industrial production and impede the war effort. The nation’s urgent and massive conversion to a war economy had catapulted the United States out of the Great Depression, but the dramatic increase in employment also threatened to put labor unions and industrial leaders at odds over working conditions and wages.

The evolution of the NWLB illustrated the complexity of developing labor policy in the rapidly changing early-war years. It was formed in 1940 as the National Defense Advisory Board; later it became the Labor Division of the Office of the Production of Management (OPM), which morphed into the National Defense Mediation Board (NDMB) until 1942 when Roosevelt renamed the unit the National War Labor Board. The NWLB was made up of political, business and labor leaders and was tasked with providing labor-policy recommendations. Although the NWLB was established to mediate between parties involved in industrial disputes, Roosevelt also gave the board power to intercede and impose settlements in order to preempt any pause in production. The following October, Roosevelt issued the Order Providing for the Stabilization of the National Economy, which expanded the NWLB’s control over wages and prices by stipulating that any adjustment of wages had to be cleared through it.

The Truman administration discontinued the National War Labor Board in 1946, giving labor-arbitration duties back to the National Labor Relations Board.

- **Feb 12 1946 – WW2:** Soviet forces penetrate the siege of Leningrad » Soviet troops create a breach in the German siege of Leningrad, which had lasted for a year and a half. The Soviet forces punched a hole in the siege, which ruptured the German encirclement and allowed for more supplies to come in along Lake Ladoga.

Upon invading the Soviet Union in June 1941, German troops made a beeline for Leningrad, the second-largest city in the USSR. In August, German forces, approaching from the west and south, surrounded the city and rendered the Leningrad-Moscow railway useless. A German offensive attempted to occupy the city but failed; in light of this, Hitler decided to impose a siege, allowing nothing to enter or leave the former capital of Old Russia. Hitler intended to wait the Soviets out, then raze the city to the ground and hand the territory over to Germany’s Finnish allies, who were advancing on the city from the north. (Finland would stop short of Leningrad, though, happy with regaining territory lost to the USSR in 1939.)

The siege began officially on September 8, 1941. The people of Leningrad began building antitank fortifications and succeeded in creating a stable defense of the city, but they were also cut off from all access to vital resources in the Soviet interior. In 1942, 650,000 Leningrad citizens died from starvation, disease, exposure, and injuries suffered from the siege and the continual German bombardment with artillery. Barges offered occasional relief in the summer and ice-borne sleds were
able to do the same in the winter. A million sick, elderly, or especially young residents of Leningrad were slowly and stealthily evacuated, leaving about 2 million people to ration available food and use all open ground to plant vegetables.

A Soviet counteroffensive pushed the Germans westward on January 27, 1944, bringing the siege to an end. It had lasted for 872 days.

- **Feb 12 1946 – WW2**: Operation Deadlight ends after scuttling 121 of 154 captured U–boats.

- **Feb 12 1947 – Post WWII**: An estimated 400-500 veterans and conscientious objectors from World Wars I and II burned their draft cards during two demonstrations, in front of the White House and at New York City’s Labor Temple, in protest of a proposed universal conscription law. This was the first peacetime draft-card burning.

- **Feb 12 1951 – Korea**: U.N. forces push north across the 38th parallel for the second time

- **Feb 12 1962 – Vietnam War**: *Operation Ranch Hand initiated* » The United States Air Force launches Operation Ranch Hand, a “modern technological area-denial technique” designed to expose the roads and trails used by the Viet Cong.

  Flying C-123 Providers, U.S. personnel dumped an estimated 19 million gallons of defoliating herbicides over 10-20 percent of Vietnam and parts of Laos between 1962-1971. Agent Orange—named for the color of its metal containers—was the most frequently used defoliating herbicide. The operation succeeded in killing vegetation, but not in stopping the Viet Cong. The use of these agents was controversial, both during and after the war, because of the questions about long-term ecological impacts and the effect on humans who either handled or were sprayed by the chemicals.

  Beginning in the late 1970s, Vietnam veterans began to cite the herbicides, especially Agent Orange, as the cause of health problems ranging from skin rashes to cancer to birth defects in their children. Similar problems, including an abnormally high incidence of miscarriages and congenital malformations, have been reported among the Vietnamese people who lived in the areas where the defoliating agents were used.

- **Feb 12 1971 – Vietnam War**: *Johnson says U.S. should stay in Vietnam* » In his State of the Union address, the president commits the United States to staying in Vietnam as long as aggression commands us to battle. Johnson justified his position on the basis of national security and the principles of democracy and national sovereignty. Citing communist China’s intention to dominate all of Asia, Johnson pledged renewed commitment to helping the South Vietnamese defeat North Vietnam in a war that had become increasingly controversial among Americans.
By 1965, the number of U.S. military advisors in Vietnam had increased to approximately 200,000 troops. In December, the draft quota doubled. Growing numbers of Americans protested the escalation of the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam. In his speech, Johnson attempted to restore confidence in America’s word and in America’s protection [while] the American Nation is asked to sacrifice the blood of its children and the fruits of its labor for the love of freedom.

Seeking to appease domestic opponents of the war, Johnson vowed to limit the conflict. He assured the international community that the United States sought neither territory nor bases, economic domination nor military alliance in Vietnam. At the same time, he pledged to give our fighting men what they must have: every gun, and every dollar, and every decision—whatever the cost or whatever the challenge. Johnson’s speech was a wasted attempt to sway increasingly polarized public opinion in favor of the Vietnam War. By year’s end, Johnson increased American troop numbers in Vietnam to 400,000.

- **Feb 12 1971 – Vietnam War:** “Harrisburg Six” charged with conspiracy » The Reverend Philip F. Berrigan, serving a six-year prison term on charges of destroying draft records, and five others are indicted by a grand jury on charges of conspiring to kidnap presidential adviser Henry Kissinger and of plotting to blow up the heating tunnels of federal buildings in Washington. The “Harrisburg Six,” as they came to be known, denied the charges and denounced them as a government effort to destroy the peace movement.

- **Feb 12 1972 – Vietnam War:** About 6,000 Cambodian troops launch a major operation to wrestle the religious center of Angkor Wat from 4,000 North Vietnamese troops entrenched around the famous Buddhist temple complex, which had been seized in June 1970. Fighting continued throughout the month. Even with the addition of 4,000 more troops, the Cambodians were unsuccessful, and eventually abandoned their efforts to expel the North Vietnamese.

- **Feb 12 1973 – Vietnam War:** The release of U.S. POWs begins in Hanoi as part of the Paris peace settlement. The return of U.S. POWs began when North Vietnam released 142 of 591 U.S. prisoners at Hanoi’s Gia Lam Airport. Part of what was called Operation Homecoming, the first 20 POWs arrived to a hero’s welcome at Travis Air Force Base in California on February 14. Operation Homecoming was completed on March 29, 1973, when the last of 591 U.S. prisoners were released and returned to the United States.
• Feb 12 1988 – Cold War: Two Soviet warships bump two U.S. navy vessels in waters claimed by the Soviet Union. The incident was an indication that even though the Cold War was slowly coming to a close, old tensions and animosities remained unabated.

• Feb 12 2002 – Yugoslavia: Former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic goes on trial at The Hague, Netherlands, on charges of genocide and war crimes in Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo. Milosevic served as his own attorney for much of the prolonged trial, which ended without a verdict when the so-called “Butcher of the Balkans” was found dead at age 64 from an apparent heart attack in his prison cell on March 11, 2006.

Slobodan Milosevic during his war crimes trial

• Feb 13 1776 – American Revolution: Patrick Henry becomes colonel of the First Virginia battalion in defense of the state’s supply of gunpowder.

• Feb 13 1776 – American Revolution: British raid Prudence Island in Narragansett Bay. In the early morning hours of January 13, 1776, British forces raid Prudence Island, Rhode Island, in an effort to steal a large quantity of sheep. But, upon landing on the island’s southern beaches, the British were ambushed by fifteen Minutemen from Rhode Island’s Second Company led by Captain Joseph Knight, who had been tipped off to the Brits’ plans and rowed across Narragansett Bay from Warwick Neck the previous morning.

A brief but deadly battle ensued before the British were forced to retreat. Three British marines were killed and seven injured during the ambush. Two Minutemen were wounded; one died and the other was taken prisoner. Afraid of further violence, residents abandoned the island between 1776 and 1777, and the island’s homes and windmill were burned.

Rhode Island’s Second Company continued to guard the area between Providence, Warwick Neck and Chopmist on Rhode Island for the next three years. Captain Knight rose to the rank of major in 1777, taking command of the Third Providence County Regiment. The Rhode Island General Assembly chose to end the Minutemen system in 1777 and the Second Company was reorganized as the Fifth Company of Scituate Militia. Major Knight and his regiment served the Patriot cause.
throughout the Rhode Island campaign of 1778. Knight received a further promotion to the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1778 and remained in the militia until his retirement in 1800, by which time he had served 34 years in the service of Rhode Island. During his tenure, Rhode Island had progressed from colony to independent state to member state of the federal union.

- **Feb 13 1807 – Civil War:** *Napoleon Bonaparte Buford is born* » Born in Woodford, Kentucky. Buford held many commands in the West and was a hero at the Battle of Belmont, Missouri, early in the war. He attended West Point and graduated in 1827. After a stint with the frontier military, he was given leave to study law at Harvard. He taught at West Point before leaving the service to become a businessman. He was an engineer and banker in Illinois during the 1840s and 1850s.

![Buford](image)

When the Civil War began, the 54-year-old Buford raised his own regiment, the 27th Illinois. He was commissioned as a colonel, and his unit was sent to Cairo, Illinois, and placed in General Ulysses S. Grant’s army. On November 7, 1861, Grant attacked a Confederate camp at Belmont, Missouri, and quickly drove the Rebels away. However, Grant’s men became preoccupied with plundering the area, and a Confederate counterattack nearly turned to disaster for the Yankees. Buford’s regiment was almost cut off from the main Union force. He rallied his men and they fought their way out of the Confederate trap. Buford was commended for his bravery.

After Belmont, Buford participated in the capture of Island No. 10, a Confederate stronghold in the Mississippi River. He was left in command of the island after its capture. Buford and his regiment fought at Corinth, Mississippi, in October 1862, but the colonel fell seriously ill from sunstroke and left field command.

Buford eventually returned to the West and was promoted to brigadier general in charge of the district of Eastern Arkansas. He remained there for the rest of the war, although his main military action came in chasing off Confederate raiders in the area. Buford generated controversy in his dealings with black troops. He had drawn earlier criticism for not helping refugee slaves, and now he proclaimed his preference for commanding white troops. He silenced some of the criticism by implementing programs for freed slaves in Arkansas that generally succeeded in taking care of their immediate needs. Poor health forced Buford’s resignation in March 1865, just before the end of the war. He was brevetted to major general following his retirement. He worked in a variety of businesses after the war and died in Chicago in 1883.
Napoleon Bonaparte Buford was the older half-brother of John Buford, a Union General who commanded the Yankee force that first engaged the Confederates at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in 1863.

- **Feb 13 1920 – Post WWI**: The League of Nations, the international organization formed at the peace conference at Versailles in the wake of WWI, recognizes the perpetual neutrality of Switzerland on this day in 1920.

- **Feb 13 1945 – WW2**: The siege of Budapest concludes with the unconditional surrender of German and Hungarian forces to the Red Army.

- **Feb 13 1945 – WW2**: Fire Bombing of Dresden - A series of Allied bombers are dispatched to Dresden, Germany to attack the city with a massive aerial bombardment reducing the “Florence of the Elbe” to rubble and flames, and killing as many as 135,000 people. It was the single most destructive bombing of the war—including Hiroshima and Nagasaki—and all the more horrendous because little, if anything, was accomplished strategically, since the Germans were already on the verge of surrender.

- **Feb 13 1950 – Cold War**: Soviets boycott United Nations Security Council » For the second time in a week, Jacob Malik, the Soviet representative to the United Nations, storms out of a meeting of the Security Council, this time in reaction to the defeat of his proposal to expel the Nationalist Chinese representative. At the same time, he announced the Soviet Union’s intention to boycott further Security Council meetings.

  Several days before the 13 JAN meeting, Malik walked out to show his displeasure over the United Nations’ refusal to unseat the Nationalist Chinese delegation. The Soviet Union had recognized the communist People’s Republic of China (PRC) as the true Chinese government, and wanted the PRC to replace the Nationalist Chinese delegation at the United Nations.

  Malik returned on 13 JAN, however, to vote on the Soviet resolution to expel Nationalist China. Six countries—the United States, Nationalist China, Cuba, Ecuador, Cuba, and Egypt—voted against the resolution, and three—the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and India—voted in favor of it. Malik immediately left the meeting, declaring that the United States was “encouraging lawlessness” by refusing to recognize the “illegal presence” of the Nationalist Chinese representatives. He concluded that “even the most convinced reactionaries” had to recognize the justness of the Soviet resolution, and he vowed that the Soviet Union would not be bound by any decisions made by the Security Council if the Nationalist Chinese representative remained. Hoping to forestall any future Security Council action, Malik announced that the Soviet Union would no longer attend its meetings. The remaining members of the Security Council decided to carry on despite the Soviet boycott.
In late June 1950, it became apparent that the Soviet action had backfired when the issue of North Korea’s invasion of South Korea was brought before the Security Council. By 27 JUN, the Security Council voted to invoke military action by the United Nations for the first time in the organization’s history. The Soviets could have blocked the action in the Security Council, since the United States, Soviet Union, China, Britain, and France each had absolute veto power, but no Russian delegate was present. In just a short time, a multinational U.N. force arrived in South Korea and the grueling three-year Korean War was underway.

- **Feb 13 1951 – Korea:** Battle of Chipyong–ni, which represented the "high–water mark" of the Chinese incursion into South Korea, commences. Casualties and losses: China 5,079 - UN 343.

- **Feb 13 1960 – Cold War:** France became the world’s fourth nuclear power, conducting its first plutonium bomb test at the Reggane base in the Sahara Desert in what was then French Algeria. "Gerboise Bleue" was detonated from a 330-foot tower and had a yield of 60-70 kilotons (equivalent to nearly 70,000 tons of TNT).

- **Feb 13 1965 – Vietnam War:** *First Operation Farm Gate missions flown* » In the first Farm Gate combat missions, T-28 fighter-bombers are flown in support of a South Vietnamese outpost under Viet Cong attack.

  By the end of the month, U.S. Air Force pilots had flown 229 Farm Gate sorties. Operation Farm Gate was initially designed to provide advisory support to assist the South Vietnamese Air Force in increasing its capability. The 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron arrived at Bien Hoa Airfield in November 1961 and began training South Vietnamese Air Force personnel with older, propeller-driven aircraft. In December, President John F. Kennedy expanded Farm Gate to include limited combat missions by the U.S. Air Force pilots in support of South Vietnamese ground forces.

  By late 1962, communist activity and combat intensity had increased so much that President Kennedy ordered a further expansion of Farm Gate. In early 1963, additional aircraft arrived and new detachments were established at Pleiku and Soc Trang. In early 1964, Farm Gate was upgraded again with the arrival of more modern aircraft. 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, and from there they launched missions against the North Vietnamese in Laos.

- **Feb 13 1965 – Vietnam War:** Operation Rolling Thunder - President Lyndon B. Johnson decides to undertake the sustained bombing of North Vietnam that he and his advisers have been contemplating for a year.

- **Feb 13 1968 – Vietnam War:** As an emergency measure in response to the 1968 communist Tet Offensive, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara approves the deployment of 10,500 troops to cope with threats of a second offensive. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had argued against dispatching any reinforcements at the time because it would seriously deplete the strategic reserve, immediately sent McNamara a memorandum asking that 46,300 reservists and former servicemen be activated.

- **Feb 13 1971 – Vietnam War:** Backed by American air and artillery support, South Vietnamese troops invade Laos.

  **Feb 13 1972 – Vietnam War:** Nixon announces additional troop withdrawals » The president announces that 70,000 U.S. troops will leave South Vietnam over the next three months, reducing U.S. troop strength there by 1 MAY to 69,000 troops. Since taking office, Nixon had withdrawn more than 400,000 American troops from Vietnam. With the reduction in total troop strength, U.S. combat deaths were down to less than 10 per week. However, Nixon still came under heavy criticism from those who charged that he was pulling out troops but, by turning to the use of air power instead of ground troops, was continuing the U.S. involvement in Vietnam rather than disengaging from the war. The last American troops would be withdrawn in March 1973 under the provisions of the Paris Peace Accords.

- **Feb 13 1984 – Cold War:** Following the death of Yuri Andropov four days earlier, Konstantin Chernenko takes over as the general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, the ruling position in the Soviet Union. Chernenko was the last of the Russian communist “hard-liners” prior to the ascension to power of the reform-minded Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985. Chernenko’s brief rule was characterized by a return to the hard-line policies of Brezhnev.

- **Feb 13 1991 – Gulf War:** Two precision-guided missiles destroyed the Amiriyah subterranean bunker in Baghdad while being used as an air-raid shelter by 408 Iraqi civilians during the first Gulf War. The resulting deaths of all inside made it the single most lethal incident for non-combatants in modern air warfare. The U.S. had detected signals coming from the bunker and considered it a military command and control center.
Visitors tour the Amiriyah Bunker. The Iraqi government has preserved the bunker as a public memorial.

-Feb 14 1778 – American Revolution: The United States Flag is formally recognized by a foreign naval vessel for the first time, when French Admiral Toussaint-Guillaume Picquet de la Motte rendered a nine gun salute to USS Ranger, commanded by John Paul Jones.

-Feb 14 1779 – American Revolution: Patriots defeat Loyalists at Kettle Creek » A Patriot militia force of 340 led by Colonel Andrew Pickens of South Carolina with Colonel John Dooly and Lieutenant Colonel Elijah Clarke of Georgia defeats a larger force of 700 Loyalist militia commanded by Colonel James Boyd on this day in 1779 at Kettle Creek, Georgia.

    The Patriots attempted a two-pronged attack. Pickens’ line engaged the Loyalists, while Dooly and Clarke’s men attempted to cross the creek and surrounding swamp. Dooly and Clarke’s troops were soon bogged down in the difficult crossing and though Boyd had sent 150 of his men out to forage for food that morning, the Loyalists still had the upper hand.

    The tide turned when the Loyalists saw their commander, Boyd, collapse from a musket wound. Panicked, they disintegrated into a disorderly retreat towards the creek as Pickens’ Patriots fired down upon their camp from above. Shortly thereafter, the two South Carolina commanders, Dooly and Clarke, emerged with their men from the swamp and surrounded the shocked Loyalists, who were attempting to retreat across the creek.

    By the end of the action, the Loyalists suffered 70 killed and another 70 captured, compared to 9 killed and 23 wounded for the Patriots. Colonel Boyd, who was wounded during the engagement, died shortly afterward. The victory was the only significant Patriot victory in Georgia and delayed the consolidation of British control in the largely Loyalist colony.

    In 1780, Colonel John Dooly was murdered at his log cabin home on his Georgia plantation by South Carolina Loyalists. Dooly County, Georgia, was named in his honor, and the spring near his former cabin in Lincoln County, Georgia, within the grounds of the Elijah Clarke State Park—named for his former Patriot partner—bears a historic marker in the martyred patriot’s memory.

-Feb 14 1864 – Civil War: Sherman enters Meridian, Mississippi » Union troops enter Meridian, Mississippi, during a winter campaign that served as a precursor to General William T. Sherman’s
March to the Sea campaign in Georgia. This often-overlooked Mississippi campaign was the first attempt by the Union at total warfare, a strike aimed not just at military objectives but also at the will of the Southern people.

Sherman launched the campaign from Vicksburg, Mississippi, with the goal of destroying the rail center at Meridian and clearing central Mississippi of Confederate resistance. Sherman believed this would free additional Federal troops that he hoped to use on his planned campaign against Atlanta, Georgia, in the following months.

Sherman led 25,000 troops east from Vicksburg and ordered another 7,000 under General William Sooy Smith to march southeast from Memphis, Tennessee. They planned to meet at Meridian in eastern Mississippi. The Confederates had few troops with which to stop Sherman. General Leonidas Polk had less than 10,000 men to defend the state. Polk retreated from the capital at Jackson as Sherman approached, and some scattered cavalry units could not impede the Yankees’ progress. Polk tried to block the roads to Meridian so the Confederates could move as many supplies as possible from the city’s warehouses, but Sherman pushed into the city on February 14 in the middle of a torrential rain.

After capturing Meridian, Sherman began to destroy the railroad and storage facilities while he waited for the arrival of Smith. Sherman later wrote: “For five days, 10,000 men worked hard and with a will in that work of destruction… Meridian, with its depots, storehouses, arsenals, hospitals, offices, hotels, and cantonments no longer exists.” Sherman waited for Smith to arrive, but he never reached Meridian. On February 21, Confederate troops under General Nathan Bedford Forrest waylaid Smith at West Point, Mississippi, and dealt the Federals a resounding defeat. Smith returned to Memphis, and Sherman turned back towards Vicksburg.

Ultimately, Sherman failed to clear Mississippi of Rebels, and the Confederates repaired the rail lines within a month. Sherman did learn how to live off the land, however, and took notes on how to strike a blow against the civilian population of the South. He used that knowledge with devastating results in Georgia later that year.

- **Feb 14 1919 – WWI: Wilson presents draft covenant for League of Nations** » In a plenary session of the Versailles peace conference on this day in 1919, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson presents the draft of the covenant for the League of Nations prepared by a League commission that had been established two weeks earlier.

  The commission, which was set up on 25 JAN and had its first meeting on 4 FEB, had tackled the formidable task of laying down the specific tenets of Wilson’s ambitious but nebulous vision—expressed in his famous Fourteen Points—of an international organization that would regulate future conflicts between nations and preserve world peace. At its start, the commission included two
representatives from each of the Big Five nations (Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the United States); nine more representatives were eventually added from the other countries present at the peace conference.

Tensions flared during the commission’s deliberations, particularly over the issues of general disarmament and the establishment of an international military force to give the League the power to enforce its principles. The French argued strongly in favor of both; the U.S. and Britain disagreed, suspicious of continued French aggression against Germany and unwilling to cede control of their own military operations to the League.

Despite these difficulties, Wilson was able to present the commission’s draft in less than two weeks. In it, the commission had outlined all aspects of the League, including its administration: a general assembly, a secretariat and an executive council. There would be no League army and no mandate for disarmament—France had lost on these points. The French had held fast, however, in their insistence that Germany not be invited to join the League right away; this would later force a frustrated Germany to agree, in the Treaty of Versailles, to the formation of an organization that it could not join. (Germany joined the League in 1926; in 1933, after the rise to power of the National Socialist or Nazi Party, it withdrew.)

With a few modifications, the covenant was approved in another plenary session of the conference on 28 APR. Many terrible things have come out of this war, Wilson had said as he presented the draft of the League covenant, but some very beautiful things have come out of it. In Wilson’s idealistic vision, the League of Nations was intended to be the most beautiful of these things, but in practice it failed to live up to expectations. For one thing, the Treaty of Versailles was never ratified by the U.S. Senate, largely because of opposition to the League covenant’s Article X, which required that all League members preserve the territorial independence of all other members and commit to joint military action, when necessary, in order to do this.

The absence of the U.S. in the League of Nations, as well as the covenant’s requirement that all League decisions be unanimous, greatly detracted from the organization’s efficacy, and within two decades, the world would again be at war. Ultimately, the League’s greatest legacy would not be its ability to keep the peace, but the groundwork it laid for another international organization: the United Nations, which would borrow some of the League’s organizational principles and, perhaps more importantly, learn from its mistakes.

- **Feb 14 1942 – WW2**: Battle of Pasir Panjang contributes to the fall of Singapore.

- **Feb 14 1943 – WW2**: Battle of the Kasserine Pass - German General Erwin Rommel and his Afrika Korps launch an offensive against an Allied defensive line in Tunisia, North Africa. The Kasserine Pass was the site of the United States’ first major battle defeat of the war. More than 1,000 American soldiers were killed by Rommel’s offensive, and hundreds were taken prisoner.

- **Feb 14 1945 – WW2**: On the first day of the bombing of Dresden, the British Royal Air Force and the United States Army Air Forces begin fire-bombing Dresden, the capital of the German state of Saxony.
• **Feb 14 1945 – WW2:** Navigational error leads to the mistaken bombing of Prague, Czechoslovakia by an American squadron of B-17s assisting in the Soviet's Vistula-Oder Offensive.

• **Feb 14 1962 – Vietnam War: Kennedy authorizes U.S. advisors to fire in self-defense** » The President authorizes U.S. military advisors in Vietnam to return fire if fired upon. At a news conference, he said, “The training missions we have [in South Vietnam] have been instructed that if they are fired upon, they are of course to fire back, but we have not sent combat troops in [the] generally understood sense of the word.” In effect, Kennedy was acknowledging that U.S. forces were involved in the fighting, but he wished to downplay any appearance of increased American involvement in the war. The next day former Vice President Nixon expressed hopes that President Kennedy would “step up the build-up and under no circumstances curtail it because of possible criticism.”

• **Feb 14 1970 – Vietnam War: Gallup Poll released** » Despite an increasingly active antiwar movement, a Gallup Poll shows that a majority of those polled (55 percent) oppose an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam. Those that favored American withdrawal had risen from 21 percent, in a November poll, to 35 percent. President Nixon had taken office in January 1969 promising to bring the war to an end, but a year later the fighting continued and support for the president’s handling of the war had begun to slip significantly.

• **Feb 14 1989 – Cold War: Sandinistas agree to free elections** » At a meeting of the presidents of Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and El Salvador, the leftist Sandinista government of Nicaragua agrees to free a number of political prisoners and hold free elections within a year; in return, Honduras promises to close bases being used by anti-Sandinista rebels. Within a year, elections in Nicaragua resulted in the defeat of the Sandinistas, removing what officials during the administration of President Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) referred to as a “beachhead of communism” in the Western Hemisphere.

Nicaragua had been a Cold War battlefield ever since the Sandinista regime came to power in 1979, following the overthrow of long-time dictator Anastacio Somoza. Almost immediately, U.S. officials criticized the new government, claiming that it was leftist—possibly Marxist—in its orientation. As relations between the United States and Nicaragua worsened, and Nicaragua moved toward a closer relationship with the communist bloc, the Reagan administration took action to bring down the Sandinista government. The foundation of this effort was economic and military aid totaling nearly one billion dollars by 1988 to the so-called Contras—anti-Sandinista rebels operating from Honduras and Costa Rica. By the late 1980s, concerns about regional stability and the widening Contra war effort spurred other Central American governments to work toward a solution to the Nicaraguan conflict. The February 1989 agreement was the culmination of that work, with Nicaragua
promising free elections within a year in exchange for Honduran promises to close the Contra bases within its borders.

Contra leaders were quick to criticize the agreement, but it was obvious that their days were numbered. The Sandinista government declared that the agreement symbolized the failure of the U.S. effort to bring it down through force. Officials of the new administration of President George Bush in the United States adopted a wait-and-see attitude towards events in the region. Ronald Reagan and other officials who served during his tenure, however, were quick to take credit for the outcome of the meeting—despite the fact that they had not participated in it. They claimed that the U.S. pressure during the previous eight years, particularly support of the Contras, had forced the Sandinistas to agree to elections. When the Sandinistas—who were heavily favored to win the election—went down to a shocking electoral defeat in February 1990, Reaganites claimed total victory.