



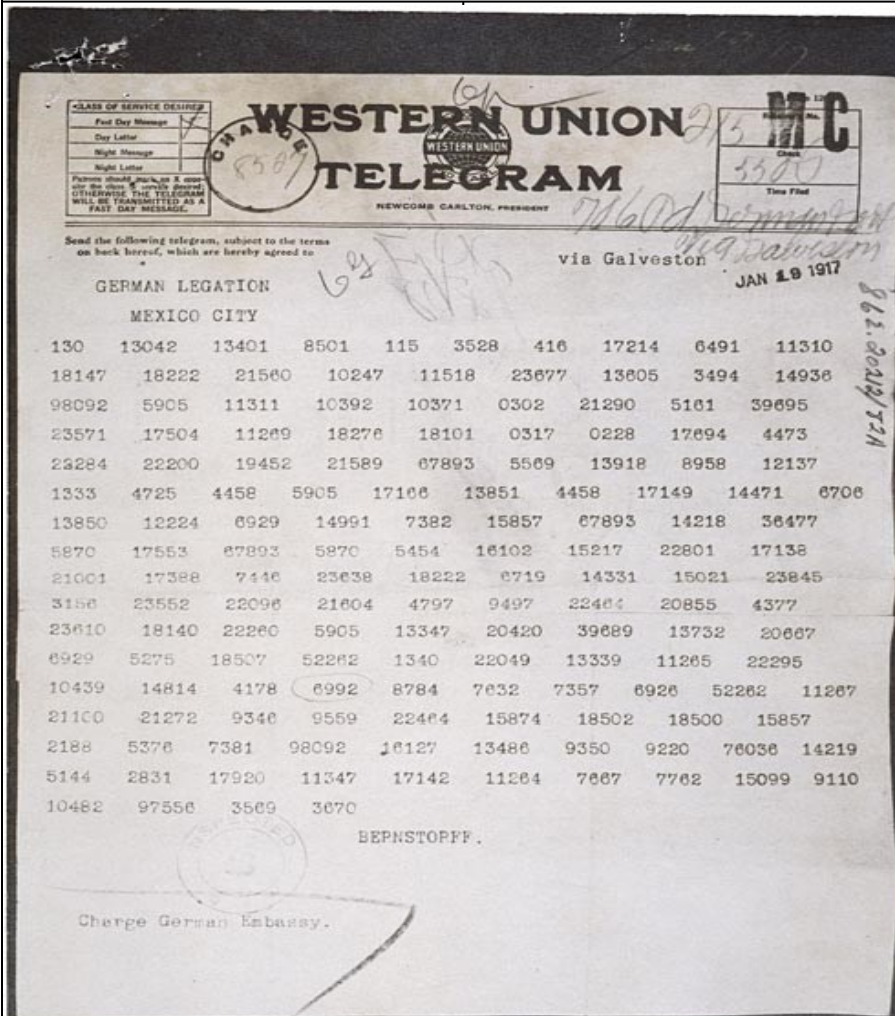
The ASC History Newsletter

100th Anniversary of World War I:

Zimmermann Telegram

This
MONTH in
military
history ...

- 1620: Mayflower reached Plymouth
- 1675: The Great Swamp Fight
- 1773: Boston Tea Party
- 1777: Valley Forge
- 1779: Benedict Arnold court-martialed
- 1786: Shay's Rebellion
- 1803: Louisiana Purchase
- 1814: Treaty of Ghent signed
- 1837: Battle of Lake Okeechobee
- 1846: Doniphan occupied El Paso
- 1863: Emancipation Proclamation
- 1865: 13th Amendment ratified
- 1941: Arcadia Conference
- 1944: Battle of the Bulge, General McAuliffe replied to a German surrender request with "Nuts"
- 1972: Operation Linebacker II
- 1979: Soviets invaded Afghanistan
- 1989: Operation Just Cause
- 2004: Battle for Fallujah



(Original Coded Telegram, deciphered text below)

"We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan

and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace."

-Zimmermann

Between 1914 and the spring of 1917, the European nations engaged in a conflict that became known as World War I. While armies moved across the face of Europe, the United States remained neutral. In 1916 Woodrow Wilson was elected President for a second term, largely because of the slogan "He kept us out of war." Events in early 1917 would change that hope. In frustration over the effective British naval blockade, in February 1917 Germany broke its pledge to limit submarine warfare. In response to the breaking of the Sussex pledge, the United

States severed diplomatic relations with Germany.

In January of 1917, British cryptographers deciphered a telegram from German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann to the German Minister to Mexico, von Eckhardt, offering United States territory to Mexico in return for joining the German cause. This message helped draw the United States into the war and thus changed the course of history. The telegram had such an impact on American opinion that, according to David Kahn, author of *The Codebreakers*, "No other single cryptanalysis has had such enormous consequences." It is his opinion that "never before or since has so much turned upon the solution of a secret message." In an effort to protect their intelligence from detection and to capitalize on growing anti-German sentiment in the United States, the British waited until February 24 to present the telegram to Woodrow Wilson, after the U.S. had already broken off diplomatic relations. The American press published news of the telegram on March 1. On April 6, 1917, Congress declared war on Germany and its allies.

The story of British intelligence efforts to intercept and decipher the German code is fascinating and complicated. For the full story on how the British intercepted the telegram and the deception necessary to hide their ability to read German diplomatic codes please see: *The Zimmermann Telegram* by Barbara Tuchman which recounts this story in all of its exciting detail.