



NO DATES COLD WAR TIMELINE

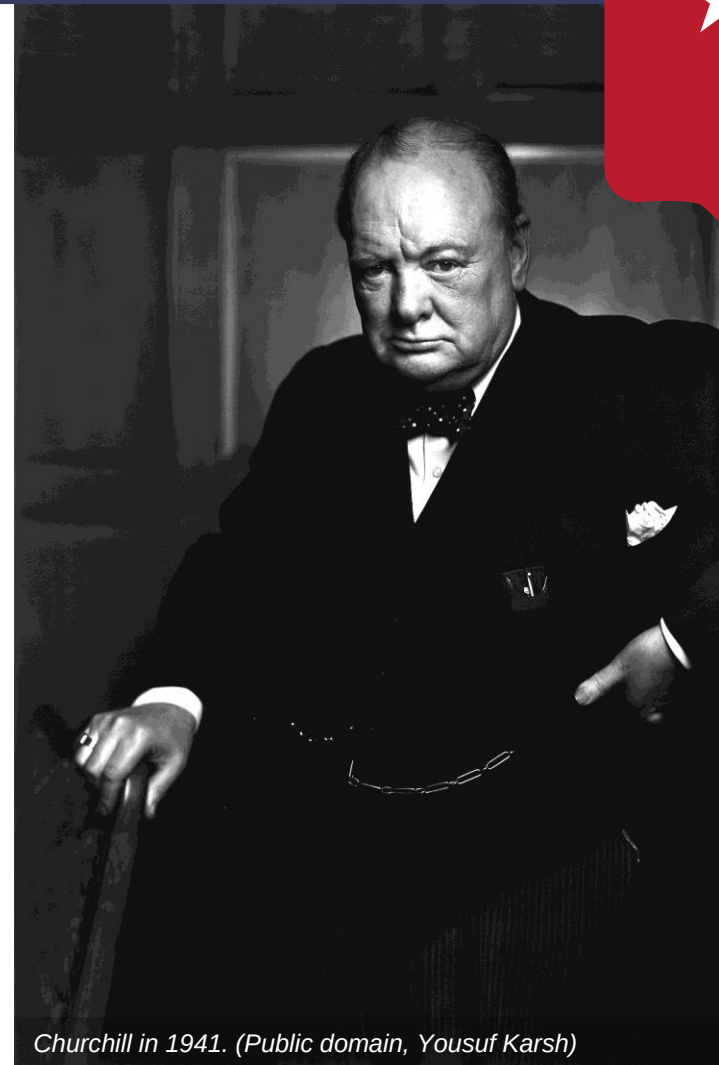
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THE IRON CURTAIN

Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill delivered a speech warning that “an iron curtain has descended across the [European] continent” and that communism threatened global peace. The “iron curtain” became a household term and defined the division of Western and Eastern Europe for almost 50 years.



Churchill in 1941. (Public domain, Yousuf Karsh)





BERLIN BLOCKADE & AIRLIFT

The first major international crisis of the Cold War began in 1947 when the Soviet Union blocked all supply lines to Allied-controlled West Berlin. In response, the U.S. launched Operation Vittles, one of the largest aerial supply missions in history. By the end of the blockade in 1949, U.S. and U.K. forces had carried out more than 278,000 airdrops and delivered over 2.3 million tons of supplies.

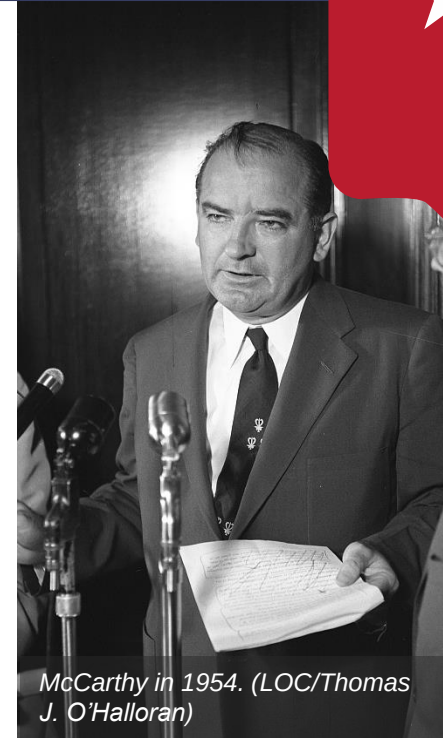


A hand-drawn illustration showing aspects of the Berlin Airlift. (LOC/Dick Kramer, 1990)



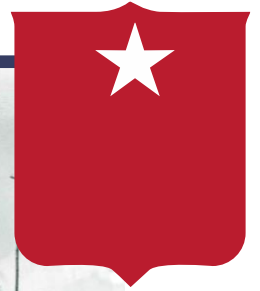
McCARTHYISM

Between 1950 and 1954, Republican Senator Joe McCarthy launched a series of investigations into alleged communist infiltration of the State Department, White House, Treasury Department, and U.S. Army. These investigations created a climate of fear and suspicion. The paranoia around the possibility of Communist spies infiltrating American life became known as the “Red Scare.” On December 2, 1954, the Senate formally censured McCarthy for reckless accusations of communist influence in the U.S. press and federal government. His censure marked the end of McCarthyism.



McCarthy in 1954. (LOC/Thomas J. O'Halloran)





START OF THE KOREAN WAR

North Korea invaded South Korea. This was the first armed conflict of the Cold War. U.S. forces entered the conflict as part of its containment policy.



The men of Company D, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment move away from active fighting. (NARA)

Domino Theory: The idea that if one nation came under communist control, then nearby nations would also come under communist control, each falling like a row of dominos. The U.S. used this theory to justify its involvement in the Korean War and the Vietnam War, as well as armed interventions in Latin America and Africa.



FIRST MAN IN SPACE

Russian Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first man in space after a successful orbital flight. It was a major achievement for the Soviet Union and a significant setback for the United States, which had been working toward achieving the same feat.



The Vostok I capsule used by Gagarin in the first space flight, at the RKK Energiya Museum in Russia. (Public domain/SiefkinDR, 2010)



RISE OF THE BERLIN WALL

The German Democratic Republic (East Germany) built the Berlin Wall, physically dividing Berlin into two parts: communist East Berlin and capitalist West Berlin. The wall was intended to stop East Germans from fleeing to West Berlin, the only area in East Germany that was not under communist control. Originally a barbed wire fence, the wall was later rebuilt as a concrete wall with watchtowers, mines, and guards instructed to shoot anyone trying to escape.



*East German workers reinforcing the Berlin Wall.
(NARA)*





GLENN ORBITS THE EARTH

John Glenn became the first American to orbit Earth. The successful flight renewed America's faith in the United States' ability to compete technologically with the Soviet Union. Glenn's achievement marked a turning point for the United States, which would soon outpace the Soviet Union in scientific advancements.



Glenn poses in front of the Mercury capsule, Friendship 7, which he used to orbit the earth. (NASA)





CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

The Cuban Missile Crisis was the closest the United States and the Soviet Union came to nuclear conflict during the Cold War. As a result, the Soviet Union removed nuclear missiles it had placed in Cuba, and the United States removed its nuclear missiles from Turkey.



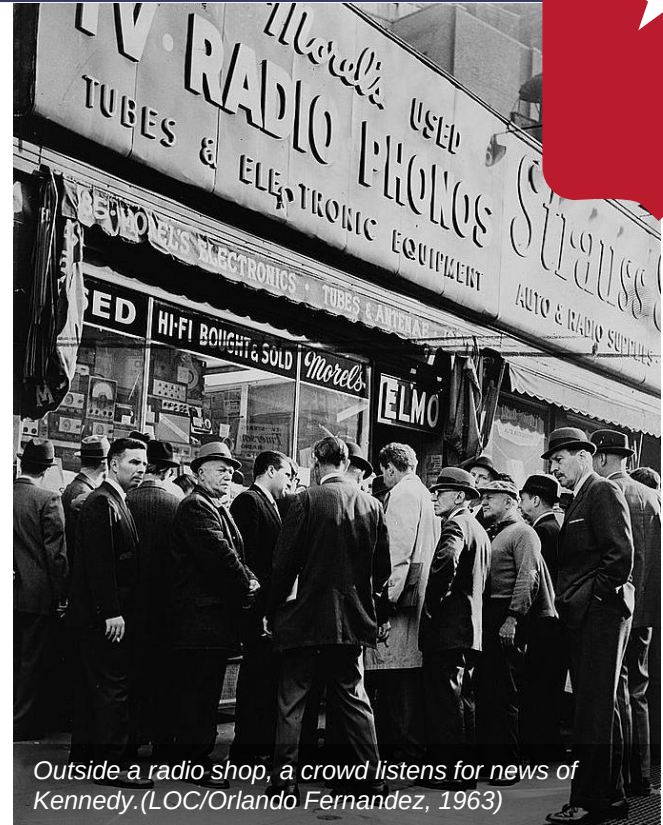
Women from Women Strike for Peace hold signs near the U.N. building in New York City. (LOC/Phil Stanziola)



JFK ASSASSINATION

President John. F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald while riding in a motorcade through Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas. Kennedy's death shocked the nation and sparked widespread mourning around the world.

President Lyndon B. Johnson established the Warren Commission to investigate Kennedy's death and found that Oswald was working alone. Kennedy was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.





GULF OF TONKIN RESOLUTION

The United States Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution granting President Johnson the authority to take “all necessary measures” to maintain peace in southeast Asia. Presidents Johnson and Nixon both used the

resolution to escalate military action in Vietnam without the Senate’s approval or a formal declaration of war. The resolution was repealed in 1970.



President Johnson signs the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. (NARA/Cecil Stoughton)





AMERICAN TROOPS ARRIVE IN VIETNAM

The first American combat troops landed on the coast of South Vietnam, ten years into the Vietnam War. The arrival of combat troops marked the United States' shift in South Vietnam from a purely economic and advisory role to an active military role.



Private First Class Fred L. Greenleaf crosses a deep irrigation canal with other members of his company. (NARA)





CHERNOBYL DISASTER

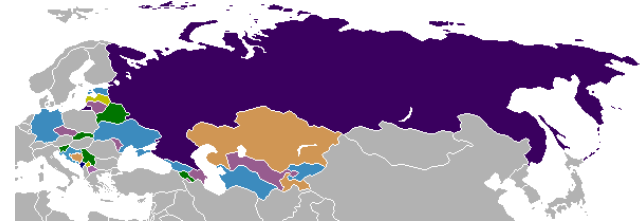


A Soviet helicopter participates in Chernobyl clean-up. (NARA)

This was the worst Cold War nuclear accident. In what is now northern Ukraine, a Soviet reactor in a nuclear power plant exploded, causing fires and releasing of radioactive materials. The explosion occurred due to poor reactor design and bad safety protocols. The Soviet Union initially denied the incident. But after radioactive debris reached as far as Sweden, the nation finally admitted the accident on April 28. Around 335,000 people had to evacuate the region. Containment efforts and cleanup are expected to last until at least 2065.



DISSOLUTION OF USSR



Two maps show the boundaries of the Soviet Union and countries after the dissolution of the U.S.S.R.
(Public domain/Aivazovsky)

In 1985, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev began introducing liberal reforms — *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring). In August 1991, communists opposed to the reforms attempted a coup against Gorbachev. They failed, but the coup marked the end of the Soviet Union. When he returned to office, Gorbachev dissolved the Communist Party. Between August and December 1991, multiple nations declared their independence from the U.S.S.R., including Ukraine and Russia. With no nation left to lead, Gorbachev resigned on December 25, 1991.



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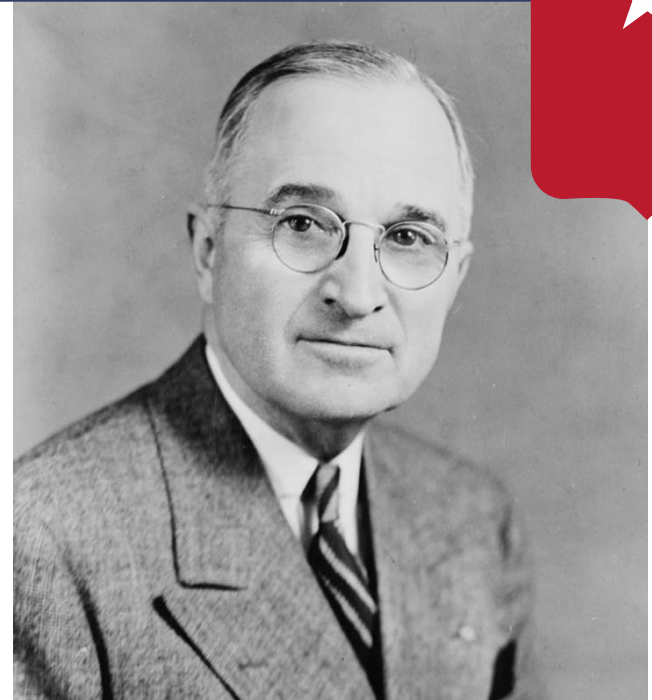
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THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE

In a joint session, President Harry Truman asked Congress for \$400 million for aid to the Greek and Turkish governments. Turkey and Greece were facing communist and Soviet pressure. Truman



Truman, circa 1945. (LOC)

argued that communist victory would undermine political stability and that the U.S. had a moral duty to support “free peoples” and contain the spread of communism. The U.S. was now committed to financially and militarily aiding other nations during peacetime.



THE MARSHALL PLAN

Through the Marshall Plan, the United States provided economic aid to rebuild post-war Europe. However, the Soviet Union refused aid for itself and its satellite nations in Eastern Europe, further dividing the capitalist west and communist east.



Marshall Plan financed tractors arrive in France. (NARA, undated)





NATO FORMED

The United States joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), along with Canada and several western European nations, to encourage European cooperation and bolster collective security against the Soviet Union.



A meeting of NATO. (NARA, undated)



USSR TESTED ATOM BOMB

The Soviet Union detonated its first atomic bomb. In doing so, it became the second nation with nuclear weapons. Having nuclear weapons both ensured its immediate survival and increased its threat to the United States.



*A mushroom cloud from Soviet nuclear testing.
(Public domain/Minatom)*





ROSENBERGS CONVICTED OF ESPIONAGE

American citizens Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were convicted of espionage. They passed secret information about the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union. The United States executed the Rosenbergs in 1953. They were the first U.S. civilians executed for espionage.



The Rosenbergs leave the courthouse after being found guilty. (LOC/Roger Higgins)

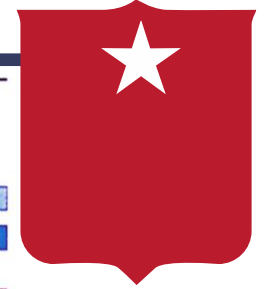


END OF KOREAN WAR

The United States, North Korea, and China signed an armistice, ending the war. However, to date, the Republic of Korea (South) and Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (North) have not signed a peace treaty. More than 36,000 American service members died in the Korean War.

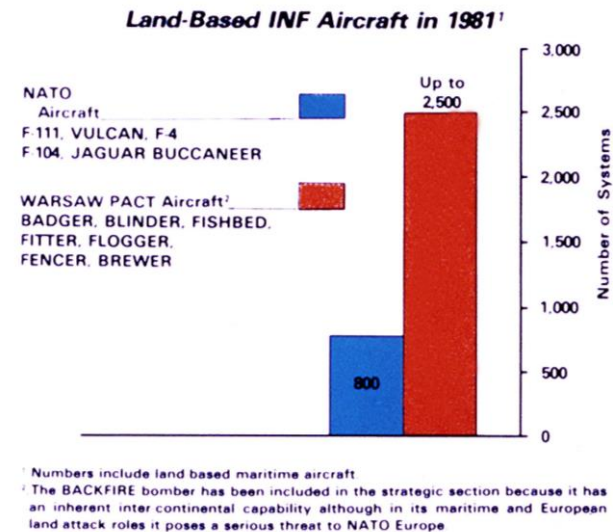
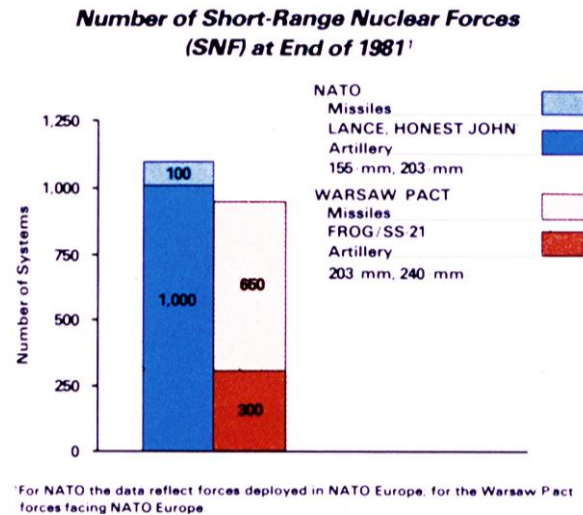


American Red Cross workers prepare for a prisoner exchange. They are preparing supplies for liberated prisoners of war. (NARA)



WARSAW PACT

The Soviet Union and seven other Soviet satellite states in Eastern and Central Europe entered a defensive alliance. The Warsaw Pact was created in response to West Germany joining NATO. The Pact was dissolved in 1991.



Graphs comparing NATO and Warsaw Pact resources in 1981. (NARA, 1983)



MARCH TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM

Over 10,000 students from universities across the country met in Washington, D.C. to protest the

Vietnam War. Students planned

this protest in response to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and President Lyndon B. Johnson's decision to escalate the war. This was one of many protests against the Vietnam War.



In 1969, Coretta Scott King leads a march to the White House as part of a protest against the Vietnam War. (LOC)

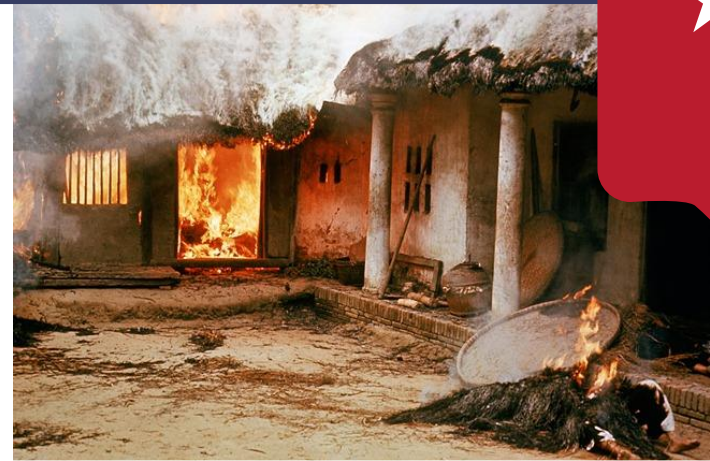




MY LAI MASSACRE

U.S. soldiers killed over 300 unarmed South Vietnamese civilians, including women, children, and elderly people.

The soldiers also tortured and mutilated many of the victims. Senior military officials covered up the brutal massacre characterizing the civilian deaths as “small-scale” and accidental. Only in 1969 was the truth of the massacre released to the press, sparking outrage from many Americans. The My Lai Massacre and the cover-up further eroded public trust in the war.



A burning house in the My Lai village. (Public domain)





MOON LANDING

Buzz Aldrin, Neil Armstrong, and Michael Collins became the first people to land on the moon. During the mission, Armstrong and Aldrin both walked on the moon, making the U.S. the first—and only—country to have an astronaut walk on the moon. While historians generally agree that the space race ended when Armstrong walked on the moon, there is no consensus on who won the space race or how one would determine a winner.





END OF SELECTIVE SERVICE

During the Vietnam War, the United States drafted nearly two million men. As the war continued, many Americans grew opposed to the war and protested the draft. In response to the growing discontentment with the Vietnam War, Richard Nixon

promised to end the draft during his presidential campaign in 1968. In 1973, Congress ended the draft and established today's all-volunteer force.



*Poster stating, "No Draft, No War, No Nukes."
(LOC)*



FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

After physically dividing the communist east and the capitalist west for almost 30 years, the Berlin Wall came down. In October, Egon Krenz became leader of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and

began reopening East Germany's borders. On November 9, the Politburo (legislative body) legalized crossings between East and West Germany. That night, Germany citizens began dismantling the Berlin Wall. The following October, Germany was reunified.



East German police and West German citizens watch as workmen demolish the Berlin Wall. (NARA/F. Lee Corkran)



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CONTAINMENT

Writing anonymously in *Foreign Affairs*, diplomat George Kennan publicly introduced the idea of containment. Kennan outlined the deep disagreements between capitalism and communism and argued that U.S. policy must be long-term containment of the USSR's expanding



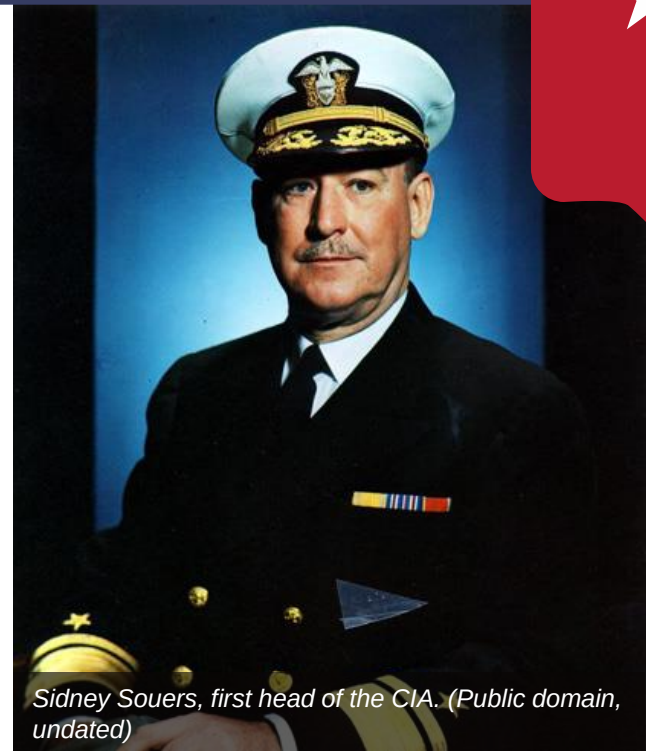
Kennan in 1947. (LOC/Harris & Ewing)

ambitions. Containment would be debated, defined and redefined, and dominate conversations about U.S. foreign policy for the rest of the Cold War.



NATIONAL SECURITY ACT OF 1947

The National Security Act of 1947 reorganized the United States' military and foreign policy agencies in an effort to promote national security. This act created the Department of Defense (DOD), the National Security Council (NSC), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). These organizations shaped U.S. foreign relations throughout the Cold War.



Sidney Souers, first head of the CIA. (Public domain, undated)





EISENHOWER DOCTRINE

The Eisenhower Doctrine promised U.S. military and economic aid to any nation facing “armed aggression” from a communist nation. This doctrine was part of U.S. containment policy to stop the global spread of communism.



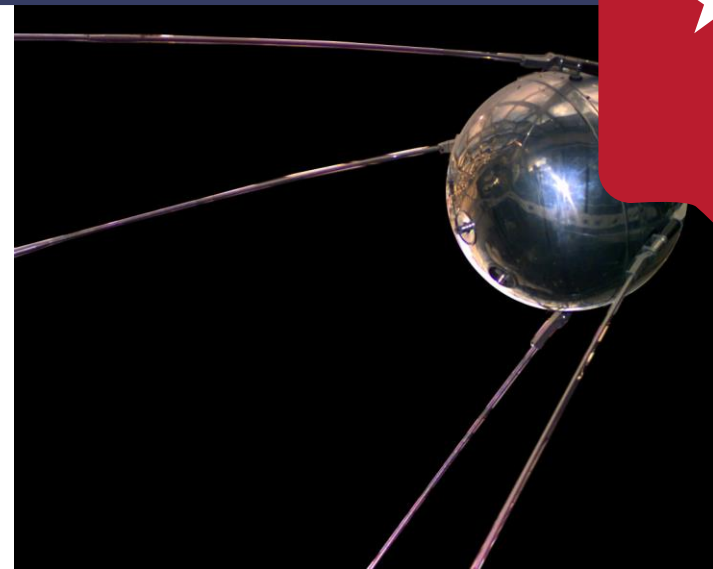
President Dwight D. Eisenhower gives a radio address on the crisis in the Middle East. (NARA)





SPUTNIK LAUNCHED

The Soviet Union launched its Sputnik satellite into space – the first manmade craft to successfully reach space. This event started the Cold War space race; the U.S. formed NASA the following year in response. The space race was one of many technological competitions between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.



Replica of Sputnik I. (NASA, undated)



KITCHEN DEBATE

In a model American kitchen at a Moscow exhibition, Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev debated the quality of life in their respective countries. Nixon argued that Cold War supremacy should be based on economic and cultural indicators, not just military power (ex. number of televisions vs. number of nuclear weapons). He praised American technology and capitalism, while Khrushchev praised Soviet technology and communism.



*Khrushchev and Nixon during the Kitchen Debate.
(LOC/Thomas J. O'Halloran)*





U - 2 INCIDENT

American U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers was shot down in Soviet airspace while on a secret mission to monitor Russian military activity. The Soviets convicted Powers of espionage and sentenced him to three years of imprisonment plus seven years of hard labor. The incident damaged Soviet-American relations. Khrushchev canceled meetings in Paris, where the two powers had planned to discuss a détente. On February 10, 1962, the Soviet Union released Powers in a prisoner exchange.





FAILED BAY OF PIGS INVASION

CIA-backed Cuban exiles invaded the Bay of Pigs on the south coast of Cuba in a plan to overthrow Fidel Castro and place a non-communist government in power. The Cuban military easily defeated the counterrevolutionaries. The failed attack

was deeply embarrassing for the Kennedy administration and empowered Castro to strengthen ties with the Soviet Union.



Bay of Pigs Monument in Miami, Florida. (Wikimedia Commons/Infrogmation, 2007)





LIMITED NUCLEAR TEST BAN TREATY

The United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in Moscow. The limited treaty banned nuclear testing in the atmosphere, space, and underwater but allowed for underground testing.



A nuclear test in Nevada in 1958. (NNSA)





OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER

The U.S. Air Force began a bombing campaign of North Vietnam that lasted three years. The operation targeted sites that were strategically valuable to the North Vietnamese. Operation Rolling Thunder increased opposition to the war in America, and most experts agree it did not meaningfully diminish North Vietnam's war capabilities.



*Navy bomber dropping bombs over Vietnam.
(U.S. Navy National Naval Aviation Museum)*



US TROOPS WITHDRAW FROM VIETNAM

The United States formally deactivated the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). This

marked the full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam and, for the United States, the end of the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War officially ended in 1975 with the fall of Saigon to North Vietnamese troops. Over 3,000,000 Americans were deployed to Southeast Asia, around 58,000 died, and over 150,000 were wounded.



*A crowd waits to greet repatriated Marine prisoners of war.
(NARA)*



IRAN HOSTAGE CRISIS

Several hundred students occupied the American Embassy in Iran, taking the military and diplomatic personnel inside hostage. The captors released women and African American hostages during the first several weeks, but 53 Americans remained captive for 444 days. Failed negotiations between the Carter Administration and the new fundamentalist government of Iran revealed the United States' decreasing influence in the region.



At Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, a man speaks in front of a group that includes released hostages. (LOC/Marion S. Trikosko)



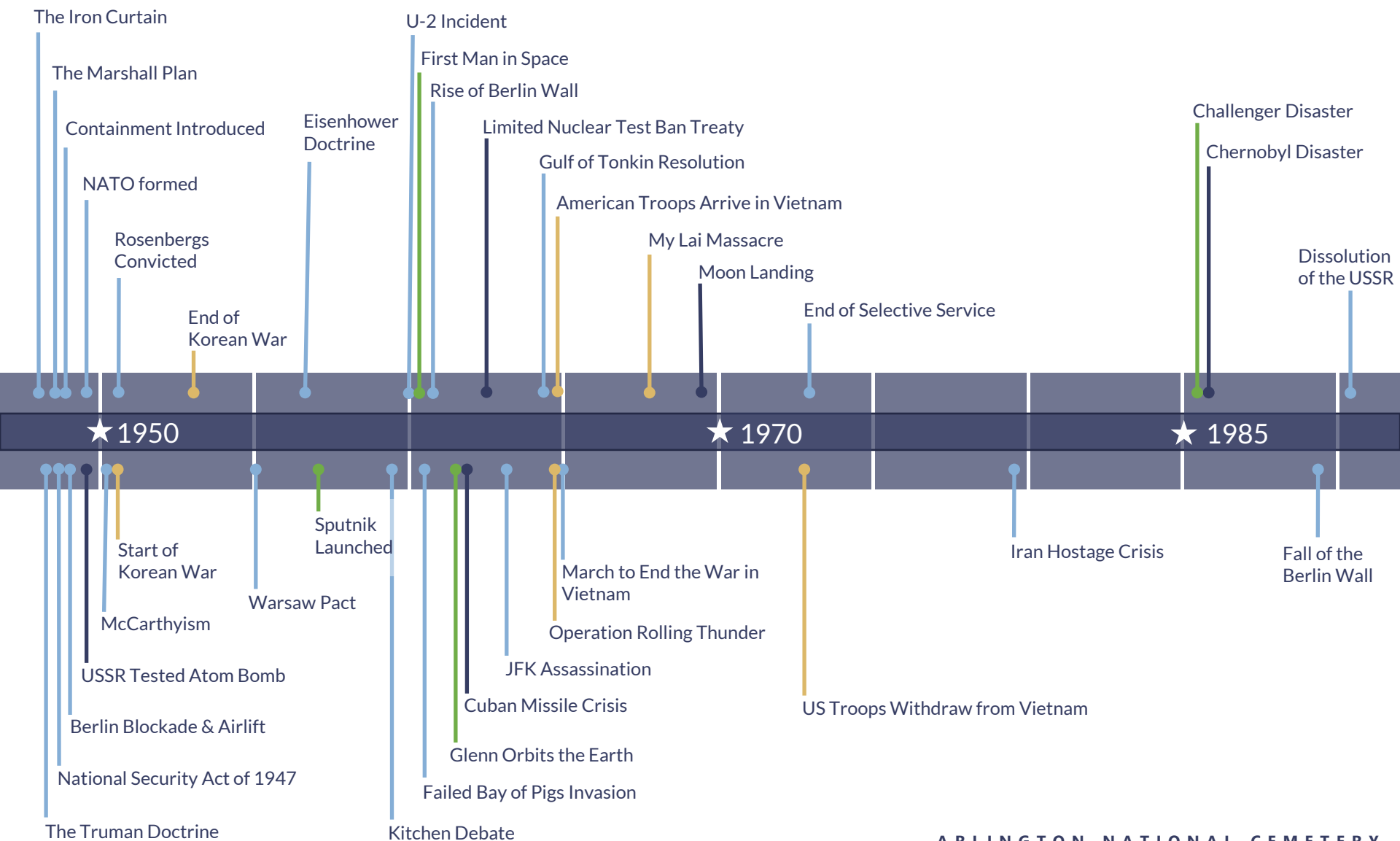
CHALLENGER DISASTER

The space shuttle Challenger exploded just 73 seconds after takeoff, killing all seven crew members. This was the worst accident in the history of the American space program. Space flights stopped for 32 months, and NASA changed their safety and oversight protocols to prevent future accidents.

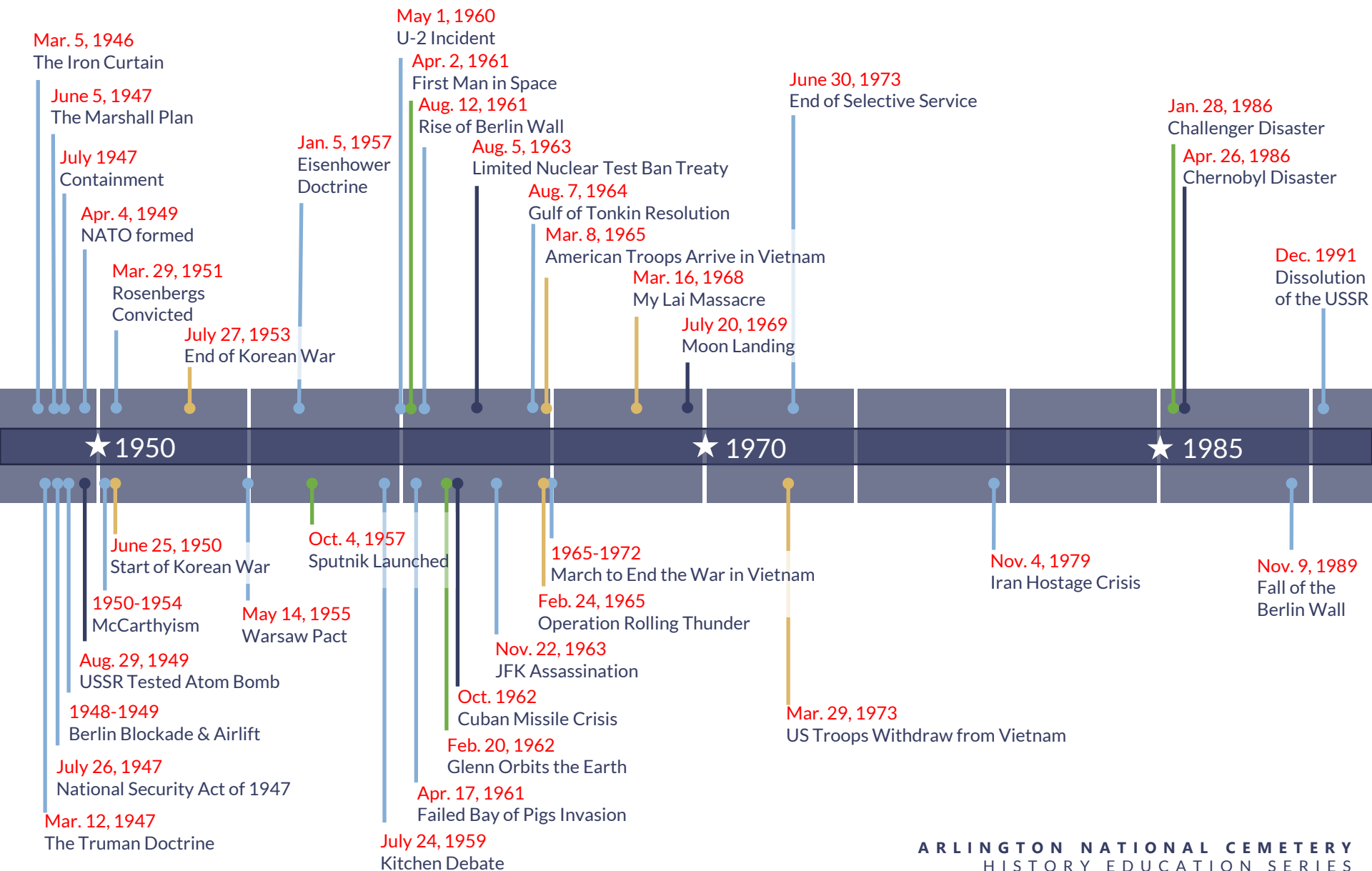


The crew of Challenger. L-R: first row: Mike Smith, Dick Scobee, Ron McNair. Back row: Ellison Onizuka, Christa McAuliffe, Greg Jarvis, Judith Resnik. (NASA)

THE COLD WAR: A TIMELINE



THE COLD WAR: A TIMELINE



1946



1950



1955



1960



1965



1970



1975



1980



1985



1990



1991

