

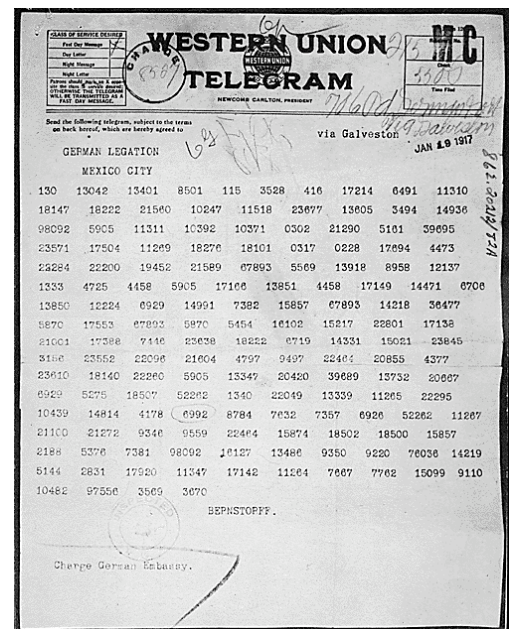
The United States Joins In

Thanks in large part to assistance from the United States, the allies were able to stop a German assault on the Western Front. Consequently, German support for the war dissolved and a cease-fire was put into effect in November 1918. The entry of the United States into the war in 1917 was key to Germany's military collapse and the end of the military stalemate. President Woodrow Wilson wanted, like most Americans at the time, to keep the U.S. out of the conflict. Wilson, who saw that a profit could be made by trading to countries such as Great Britain during the war, had been trying to keep the United States neutral in the conflict while trading with Great Britain and hoping not to antagonize Germany. A series of events, however, including German submarines attacks on U.S. targets, pushed Wilson to ask for a declaration of war from Congress. By 1918, five million Americans were in uniform.

The Intercepted Telegram

As mentioned, President Woodrow Wilson wanted to keep the U.S. out of the Great War at all costs. In fact, he won the previous election because of his promise to keep the U.S. out of the war. When a German U-boat sank the British liner Lusitania in 1915, with 128 Americans aboard, President Wilson vowed that "America was too proud to fight" and demanded an end to attacks on passenger ships. Germany initially complied.

In January 1917, Germany resumed submarine warfare on United States merchant ships. Later that month, Britain's secret intelligence group decrypted the German diplomatic code, and discovered a proposal from Berlin (called the Zimmermann Telegram or Zimmermann Note) asking Mexico to join the war as Germany's ally against the United States. The proposal suggested that if the U.S. were to enter the war, Mexico should declare war against the United States. This would prevent the United States from joining the Allies and being able to deploy troops to Europe, and would give Germany more time for their submarine warfare program to strangle Britain's vital war supplies. In return, the Germans would promise Mexico support in reclaiming Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.



After the British revealed the telegram to the United States, President Wilson released the captured telegram as a way of building support for U.S. entry into the war. After submarines sank seven U.S. merchant ships and the publication of the Zimmermann telegram in U.S. newspapers, Wilson called for war on Germany, which the U.S. Congress declared that April.

Though 117,000 United State soldiers would die in the war, the presence of American troops in France made a difference; the German army saw it could not win the war and thousands surrendered on the western front in the fall of 1918 thus ending the Great War.