

Military Conflicts-Post Civil War Era

Post-Civil War era (1865–1917)

For more details on this topic, see [History of the United States \(1865-1918\)](#).

The scope of the Civil War was as great as many of those in Europe, and the United States began to see itself as potential player on the world stage. With the country now stretching to the Pacific, eyes turned to overseas. The motivation behind the [Spanish-American War](#), [Philippine-American War](#), and U.S. involvement in the [Boxer Rebellion](#) are debated among historians.

Indian Wars (1865–1870)

Main article: [Indian Wars](#)

See also: [List of Medal of Honor recipients for the Indian Wars](#)

After the Civil War, [Manifest Destiny](#) expansion began in earnest. The [Transcontinental Railroad](#) and other trade routes linking California with the eastern states disrupted traditional Native America interactions. Many Native American tribes of the [Great Plains](#) and Southwest resisted this encroachment. Generals from the Civil War such as [William Tecumseh Sherman](#) and [Philip Sheridan](#) were assigned to conquer any Indians who offered military resistance to the expansion of the United States.

Spanish-American War (1898)

Main article: [Spanish-American War](#)

See also: [List of Medal of Honor recipients for the Spanish-American War](#)

The [Spanish-American War](#) took place in 1898, and resulted in the United States of America gaining control over the former Spanish colonies in the [Caribbean](#) and Pacific, most notably [Cuba](#), [Puerto Rico](#), [Guam](#) and the [Philippines](#).

Philippine-American War (1899-1913)

Main article: [Philippine-American War](#)

See also: [List of Medal of Honor recipients for the Philippine-American War](#)



U.S. soldiers of the First Nebraska volunteers, company B, near Manila, 1899

The [Philippine-American War](#) was between the armed forces of the United States and the [Philippines](#) from 1899 through 1902.

This conflict is also known as the "Philippine Insurrection." This name was historically the most commonly used in the U.S., but Filipinos and an increasing number of American historians refer to these hostilities as the "Philippine-American War," and, in 1999, the U.S. [Library of Congress](#) reclassified its references to use this term.

Banana Wars (1898-1935)

Main article: [Banana Wars](#)

The Banana Wars is a term used to describe US intervention in Latin America from the end of the [Spanish American War](#) in 1898 until 1935. These wars include involvement in [Cuba](#), Mexico, [Panama](#) with the [Panama Canal Zone](#), [Haiti](#) (1915-1935), [Dominican Republic](#) (1916-1924) and [Nicaragua](#) (1912-1925) & (1926 - 1933).

Most notable of these conflicts was when U.S. forces [occupied the Mexican city of Veracruz](#) for over six months in 1914, in response to the April 9, 1914 "[Tampico Affair](#)," which involved the brief arrest of U.S. sailors by soldiers of the regime of Mexican President [Victoriano Huerta](#). The incident came in the midst of poor diplomatic relations with the United States, related to the ongoing [Mexican Revolution](#).

In response to the Tampico Affair, U.S. President [Woodrow Wilson](#) ordered the Navy to occupy Veracruz. Huerta was overthrown and a regime more favorable to the U.S. was installed. The incident, however, worsened U.S.-Mexican relations for many years.

The Boxer Rebellion

Main article: [Boxer Rebellion](#)

See also: [China Relief Expedition Campaigns](#) and [List of Medal of Honor recipients for the Boxer Rebellion](#)

The Boxer Rebellion was an uprising against [Western](#) commercial, religious, and political influence in China during the final years of the 19th century. The U.S. contributed Army and Marine units, the [China Relief Expedition](#), to an international joint force called the [Eight-Nation Alliance](#), which captured [Peking](#) and forced a Chinese capitulation. By August 1900, over 230 foreigners, thousands of Chinese [Christians](#) and unknown numbers of rebels, their sympathizers and other Chinese had been killed in the revolt and its suppression.

World War I (1917–1918)

Main article: [World War I](#)

See also: [List of Medal of Honor recipients for World War I](#)



Lt. Teofilo Marxuach

The United States originally wished to remain neutral when World War I broke out in August 1914. However, it insisted on its right as a neutral party to immunity from German submarine attack. The ships carried food and raw materials to Britain. In 1917 the Germans [resumed submarine attacks](#), knowing that it would lead to American entry. However the U.S. had deliberately kept its army small and mobilization took a year. Meanwhile the U.S. sent more supplies and money to Britain and France, and started the first peacetime draft. Economic mobilization was much slower than expected, so the decision was made to send divisions to Europe without their equipment, relying instead on British and French supplies. The first shots fired by the United States in World War I between the United States and Germany occurred in [Puerto Rico](#)'s San Juan Bay and not in Europe. On April 6, 1917, the day that the United States declared war on Germany, Lt. [Teofilo Marxuach](#), of the "[Puerto Rico Regiment](#)", was the officer of the day at [El Morro Castle](#) (then called Fort Brooke). The *Odenwald*, built in 1903 (not to be confused with the German World War II war ship which carried the same name), was an armed German supply ship which tried to force its way out of the bay and deliver supplies to the German [submarines](#) waiting in the Atlantic Ocean. Lt. Marxuach gave the order to open fire on the ship from the walls of the fort. The *Odenwald* was forced to return and its supplies were confiscated.^[2] In 1917 ex-President [Theodore Roosevelt](#) was authorized by Congress to raise 4 Divisions of Volunteers to fight in France-[Roosevelt's World War I volunteers](#); however [Woodrow Wilson](#) refused this offer. By summer 1918, a million American soldiers, or "[doughboys](#)" as they were often called, of the [American Expeditionary Force](#) were in Europe under the command of [John J. Pershing](#), with 25,000 more arriving every week. The failure of Germany's spring offensive meant they had exhausted their manpower reserves and were unable to launch attacks or even defend

their lines. Meanwhile, the German home front revolted and a [new German government](#) signed a conditional surrender, [the Armistice](#), ending the war on November 11, 1918.

Russian Revolution

The so-called [Polar Bear Expedition](#) was the involvement of U.S. troops, during the tail end of [World War I](#) and the [Russian Revolution](#), in fighting the [Bolsheviks](#) in [Arkhangelsk](#), Russia in 1918 and 1919.

Neutrality Acts

After the costly US involvement in World War I, [isolationism](#) grew in the U.S. Congress refused membership in the [League of Nations](#), and in response to the growing turmoil in Europe and Asia, the gradually more restrictive [Neutrality Acts](#) were passed, which were intended to prevent the U.S. from supporting either side in a war. The size of the U.S. military declined greatly, with the loss of many senior officers. President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) sought to support Britain, however, and in 1940 passed the [Lend-Lease](#) Act, which permitted an expansion of the "cash and carry" arms trade to develop with the United Kingdom, which controlled the Atlantic sea lanes.

World War II (1939–1945)

Main article: [Military history of the United States during World War II](#)

See also: [List of Medal of Honor recipients for World War II](#)

During the [interwar period](#) the United States again reduced its military, but mobilized to its largest levels in history during [World War II](#). The [global conflict](#) started on 1 September 1939 and raged until 2 September 1945, involving most of the peoples of the world. It was the most extensive and costly war in history as well as the history of the United States (excepting personnel).

US involvement in World War II was initially limited to providing [war material and financial support](#) to the [United Kingdom](#), the [Soviet Union](#), and [Republic of China](#). The US entered officially on 8 December 1941 following the [Japanese attack](#) on [Pearl Harbor](#), Hawaii the previous day. This attack was followed by attacks on US, Dutch and British possessions across the Pacific. On 11 December, the remaining [Axis powers](#), Germany and Italy, declared war on the US, drawing the US firmly into the war and removing all doubts about the global nature of the conflict.

The loss of 8 battleships and 2000 sailors and airmen at Pearl Harbor forced the US to rely on its remaining [aircraft carriers](#), which won a major victory over Japan at [Midway](#) just 6 months into the war, and its growing [submarine](#) fleet. The Navy and Marine Corps followed this up with an [island hopping](#) campaign across the central and South Pacific in 1943-45, reaching the outskirts of Japan in the [Battle of Okinawa](#). During 1942 and 1943, the US deployed millions of men and thousands of planes and tanks to the UK, beginning with the [strategic bombing](#) of [Nazi Germany](#) and occupied Europe and leading up to the

Allied invasions of occupied [North Africa](#) in November, 1942, [Sicily](#) and [Italy](#) in 1943, [France](#) in 1944, and the invasion of Germany in 1945, parallel with the Soviet invasion from the east. That led to the [surrender of Nazi Germany](#) in May 1945. In the Pacific, the US experienced much success in naval campaigns during 1944, but bloody battles at [Iwo Jima](#) and [Okinawa](#) in 1945 led the US to look for a way to end the war with minimal loss of lives. The U.S. used [atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki](#) to shock the Japanese leadership, which (combined with the Soviet invasion of Manchuria) quickly caused the [surrender of Japan](#).

Despite the crippling effects of the [Great Depression](#), the United States was able to mobilize quickly, eventually becoming the dominant military power in most theaters of the war (excepting only eastern Europe and mainland China), and the industrial might of the US economy is widely cited as a major factor in the [Allies'](#) eventual victory in the war. Early in the war, the US military was perceived by some observers to be too "green" and untested to be of much use other than cannon fodder against experienced German and Japanese troops (especially as their first major action against German forces resulted in the humiliating defeat at the [Battle of the Kasserine Pass](#)), but the US eventually acquitted itself well and established a modern military tradition. Strategic and tactical lessons learned by the US, such as the importance of [air superiority](#) and the dominance of the [aircraft carrier](#) in naval actions, continue to guide US military doctrine more than 60 years later.

World War II holds a special place in the American psyche as the country's greatest triumph, and the soldiers of World War II are frequently referred to as "the greatest generation" for their sacrifices in the name of liberty. Over 16 million served (about 13% of the population), and over 400,000 were killed during the war; only the [American Civil War](#) saw more Americans killed (although the majority of soldier deaths that were directly caused by the war were the result of disease). The US entered the war, like many other nations, as a country struggling with economic and social problems and unsure of its identity. It emerged as one of the two undisputed [superpowers](#) along with the [Soviet Union](#), and unlike the Soviet Union, the US homeland was virtually untouched by the ravages of war. The importance of US military and political power in world affairs since 1945 cannot be overstated; the outcome of the war and the fortunes of the victors have shaped world events to this day.

During and following World War II, the United States and United Kingdom developed an increasingly strong defense and intelligence relationship. Manifestations of this include extensive basing of US forces in the UK, shared intelligence, shared military technology (e.g. nuclear technology) and shared procurement.

See also: [Special relationship](#)

Further information: [List of United States Army divisions during World War II](#)

Cold War (1945–1991)

Main article: [Cold War](#)

Following the Second World War, the United States emerged as a global [superpower](#) vis-a-vis the [Soviet Union](#) in the [Cold War](#). In this period of some forty years, the United States provided foreign military aid and direct involvement in [proxy wars](#) against the [Soviet Union](#). It was the principal foreign actor in the [Korean War](#) and [Vietnam War](#) during this era. Nuclear weapons were held in ready by the United States under a concept of [mutually assured destruction](#) with the Soviet Union.

Postwar Military Reorganization (1947)

The [National Security Act of 1947](#), meeting the need for a military reorganization to complement the U.S. superpower role, combined and replaced the former Department of the Navy and War Department with a single [cabinet](#)-level Department of Defense. The act also created the [National Security Council](#), the [Central Intelligence Agency](#), and the [Air Force](#).

Korean War

Main article: [Korean War](#)

See also: [List of Korean War Medal of Honor recipients](#)

The Korean War was a conflict between the United States and its [United Nations](#) allies and the [communist](#) powers under influence of the [Soviet Union](#) (also a UN member nation) and the People's Republic of China (which later also gained UN membership). The principal combatants were North and South Korea. Principal allies of South Korea included the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, although many other nations sent troops under the aegis of the [United Nations](#). Allies of North Korea included the People's Republic of China, which supplied military forces, and the Soviet Union, which supplied [combat advisors](#) and aircraft pilots, as well as arms, for the Chinese and North Korean troops. In the United States, the conflict was termed a [police action](#) under the aegis of the United Nations rather than a war, largely to remove the necessity of a Congressional [declaration of war](#).

The war started badly for the US and UN. North Korean forces struck massively in the summer of 1950 and nearly drove the outnumbered US and ROK defenders into the sea. However the United Nations intervened, naming [Douglas MacArthur](#) commander of its forces, and US-ROK forces acting under the UN auspices held a perimeter around [Pusan](#), gaining time for reinforcement. MacArthur, in a bold but risky move, ordered an amphibious invasion well behind the front lines at [Inchon](#), cutting off and routing the North Koreans and quickly crossing the 38th Parallel into North Korea. As UN forces continued to advance toward the [Yalu River](#) on the border with Communist China, MacArthur and [U.S. President Harry Truman](#) came into serious disagreement about military objectives and resolution of the conflict. In November, 1950, after Truman refused to bomb bridges on the Yalu River, the Chinese Army poured across the border and sent UN forces reeling back across the 38th Parallel. MacArthur was later relieved of his command by Truman for insubordination, and while some feared the conflict might spark another world war, negotiations beginning shortly after MacArthur's dismissal

eventually resulted in a stalemate and armistice in 1953, with the two Koreas remaining divided at the [38th parallel](#). North and South Korea are still today in a state of war, having never signed a peace treaty, and US forces remain stationed in South Korea as part of US foreign policy.

Lebanon crisis of 1958

The [Lebanon crisis of 1958](#) was a political and religious conflict between the pro-Western government of President [Camille Chamoun](#) and Sunni Muslims who supported joining the [United Arab Republic](#). A Muslim rebellion and the toppling of a pro-Western government in Iraq caused President Chamoun to call for U.S. assistance. President [Dwight D. Eisenhower responded by deploying](#) Marines to bolster the pro-Western Lebanese government of President Camille Chamoun against internal opposition and threats from the United Arab Republic. Marines stayed from July 15 to October 25 of that year.