

The Zimmermann Telegram

This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of the United States' entry into World War I. On 6 April 1917, at the behest of President Woodrow Wilson, a special joint session of Congress voted to declare war on Germany.

The United States' entry into the war was precipitated by several events, including the sinking of the British passenger ship *Lusitania* in May 1915. The attack left 128 Americans dead and began to move American sentiments away from neutrality and against Germany. And, in early 1917, the Germans decided to engage in unrestricted submarine warfare against all commercial ships attempting to cross the German blockade of Great Britain. In March of that year, five U.S. ships were sunk by German submarines, pushing the United States even further toward war. However, perhaps the greatest impetus for U.S. entry into World War I may be the discovery of what has become known as the Zimmermann Telegram.

Named for its originator, German Foreign Secretary Arthur Zimmermann, the telegram was intercepted by British intelligence. Decoding revealed a message to the

Send the following telegram, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to


GERMAN LEGATION
MEXICO CITY

130	13042	13401	8501	115	3528	416	17214	6491	11310
18147	18222	21560	10247	11518	23677	13805	3494	14936	
98092	5905	11311	10392	10371	0302	21290	5161	39695	
23571	17504	11269	18276	18101	0317	0228	17694	4473	
23284	22200	19452	21589	67893	5569	13918	8958	12137	
1333	4725	4458	5905	17166	13851	4458	17149	14471	6706
13850	12224	6929	14991	7382	15857	67893	14218	36477	
5870	17553	67893	5870	5454	16102	15217	22801	17138	
21001	17388	7446	23638	18222	671				
3156	23552	22096	21604	4797	9497				
23610	18140	22260	5905	13347	2042				
6929	5275	18507	52262	1340	22049				
10439	14814	4178	6992	8784	7632				
21100	21272	9346	9559	22464	1587				
2188	5376	7381	98092	16127	13486				
5144	2831	17920	11347	17142	1126				
10482	97556	3569	3670						

BEPNSTOPFF.

Charge German Embassy.

via Galveston
JAN 19 1917



Arthur Zimmermann

The Zimmermann Telegram was sent in January 1917 from German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann to Heinrich von Eckardt, the German ambassador to Mexico. The telegram proposed an offer of three U.S. states to Mexico in exchange for their support of the German war effort. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives)

The U.S. states that were promised to Mexico in the Zimmermann Telegram

Arizona

New Mexico

Texas

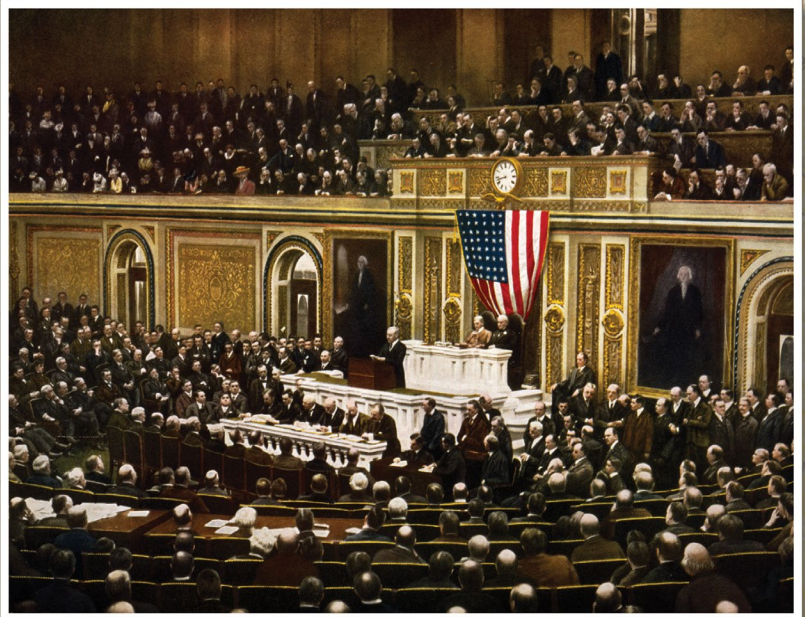
Mexico

German ambassador to Mexico, Heinrich von Eckardt, instructing him to propose a secret military alliance between Germany and Mexico in the event that the United States entered the war. The message read,

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.

Signed, ZIMMERMANN.

Mexico declined the alliance. However, the revelation of the telegram to the American public, coupled with the damage to U.S. ships from Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare, drove the United States to unite with the Allies and declare war on Germany. ■



President Woodrow Wilson asks Congress to declare war on Germany 2 April 1917, causing the United States to enter World War I. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)