

Imperial War Museum First World War Centenary Programme

1917

Date	Event
January 1917	
19 January	German Foreign Secretary, Arthur Zimmermann, sends a secret telegram to the German minister in Mexico telling him to offer German support to the Mexicans if they were to attack the United States. The telegram is intercepted by British naval intelligence.
February 1917	
February	Food shortages in Germany and Austria-Hungary, caused by the British blockade and the harsh winter, cause widespread hardship and starvation. Becomes known as the Turnip Winter.
1 February	Germany begins a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare
2 February	Public campaign launched in Britain to encourage people to eat less bread as a result of shortages
3 February	USA breaks off diplomatic relations with Germany as a result of the resumed submarine campaign
24 February	Kut al Amara recaptured as part of a new British offensive in Mesopotamia aimed at reaching Baghdad
25 February	German forces facing the Somme withdraw around 40km (25 miles) to new, strongly prepared defences known to the British as the Hindenburg Line. The withdrawal continues until 5 April.
March 1917	
1 March	The Zimmerman telegram offering German support to a Mexican attack on the US is made public in US newspapers, with the approval of President Wilson
5 March	British government approves the creation of a National War Museum in London (changed to the Imperial War Museum in December, to reflect the efforts of people from across the Empire)
11 March	Baghdad captured by British forces in Mesopotamia
12 March	Start of the first revolution in Russia
15 March	Tsar Nicholas II abdicates as ruler of Russia. The Provisional Government assumes power.
26 March	First Battle of Gaza. British forces from Egypt led by General Sir Archibald Murray nearly break through Turkish lines in Palestine but fail to exploit their success.
28 March	Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) formed in Britain, offering women the chance to serve directly in the armed forces. Over 57,000 women enrol in the WAAC, with 9,000 serving in France.
31 March	First members of the WAAC arrive in France
April 1917	
3 April	Lenin arrives back in Russia by a sealed train allowed to pass through Germany from Switzerland
6 April	United States of America declares war on Germany and sides with the Allies
9 April	Battle of Arras. British forces advance over 6km (3½ miles) on the opening day. The Canadians seize Vimy Ridge. Fighting continues until 4 May with increasingly heavy casualties.
16 April	Second Battle of the Aisne. Offensive launched by the French under General Robert Nivelle along the Chemin des Dames. Following heavy casualties, fighting called off on 20 April after few gains.
17 April	Second Battle of Gaza. British troops in Palestine are heavily defeated by Turkish forces in a renewed attempt to break through.
24 April	First Battle of Doiran. AI Salonika Allied troops launch an attack as a prelude to a wider spring offensive in the Balkans. Continues until 22 May.
29 April	Outbreak of mutinies in French army units at Châlons-sur-Marne following their recent heavy casualties and defeat. Indiscipline continues until October.
May 1917	
10 May	To combat the German submarine threat, British introduce the convoy system, moving large numbers of merchant ships together under naval protection.
15 May	General Robert Nivelle replaced in command of the French armies by General Philippe Pétain
18 May	US Congress passes a bill to recruit half a million men for war service
21 May	Imperial War Graves Commission formally established in London (becoming the present Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1960)
25 May	First daylight aeroplane raid on Britain by German Gotha bombers
June 1917	
7 June	Battle of Messines. After the explosion of 19 huge mines, British, Irish, Australian and New Zealand troops seize the Messines Ridge south of Ypres. Fighting continues until 14 June.
10 June	Battle of Ortigara. Italians launch disappointing attack on the Austro-Hungarians on the Trentino front in the Alps. Continues until 29 June.
13 June	Daylight raid on London by 18 German Gotha bombers kills 157 people and injures 432
17 June	Portuguese troops see action on the Western Front for the first time
28 June	First contingent of US troops arrives in France
29 June	General Sir Edmund Allenby takes over command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force from General Sir Archibald Murray
29 June	Russians begin a summer offensive against the Germans directed by Alexander Kerensky, war minister in the Provisional Government. They suffer a series of defeats and setbacks. Fighting continues until 18 July.
July 1917	
6 July	An Arab force from the Hejaz guided by T E Lawrence captures the Red Sea port of Aqaba
	Conscription bill passed by the Canadian parliament
7 July	Daylight Gotha bomber raid on London kills 57 people
14 July	Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg replaced as German Chancellor by Georg Michaelis
17 July	British royal family changes its name from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to Windsor
31 July	Third Battle of Ypres begins, popularly known as Passchendaele. Fighting continues until 10 November.
August 1917	
1 August	Heavy rain falls across the Ypres battlefields for almost the whole month, preventing any progress
	Pope Benedict XV makes another appeal for peace
3 August	Mutiny in the German High Seas Fleet at Wilhelmshaven
6 August	Alexander Kerensky becomes Prime Minister of Russia
20 August	French launch a new attack at Verdun and recapture more ground lost the previous year
September 1917	
3 September	Germans capture Riga on the Baltic coast using their new 'stormtrooper' tactics
11 September	One of the French air force's leading fighter aces, Captain Georges Guynemer, shot down and killed in Belgium
20 September	Battle of the Menin Road Ridge. Renewed attack by British, Australian and New Zealand troops towards Passchendaele begins steady advances in dry weather.
29 September	German Gotha bombers start night raids on London
October 1917	
19 October	Last German airship raid on London
24 October	Battle of Caporetto. Austro-Hungarians and Germans break through the Italian lines on the Isonzo and force a retreat of 140km (90 miles). 300,000 Italian prisoners are taken. Fighting carries on until 10 November.
26 October	Second Battle of Passchendaele. British and Canadian troops begin the final assault on the village.
31 October	Third Battle of Gaza. Led by Allenby, British troops, combined with an Australian attack at Beersheba, finally breaking through Turkish lines in Palestine
November 1917	
2 November	British government issues the Balfour Declaration, supporting the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
7 November	Second Russian Revolution. Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, seize power and overthrow the Provisional Government
10 November	Third Battle of Ypres ends with the capture of Passchendaele village
12 November	Italian retreat from Caporetto ends. With British and French troops transferred from the Western Front, the Italians manage to establish a new front along the River Piave.
16 November	Georges Clemenceau becomes Prime Minister and Minister of War in France
20 November	Battle of Cambrai. Using tanks, aircraft and artillery a major advance is made into the Hindenburg Line.
30 November	Germans launch strong counter-attacks at Cambrai and recapture almost all the ground they had lost
December 1917	
9 December	Jerusalem taken by the British forces in Palestine, ending 673 years of Turkish rule
15 December	Bolshevik government in Russia signs an armistice with the Germans, suspending hostilities on the Eastern Front

Military events	highlighted in khaki
Naval events	highlighted in green
Aviation events	highlighted in orange
Political events	highlighted in light blue
Social events	highlighted in red