**Korean War**

On June 25, 1950, Communist North Korean forces invaded South Korea, beginning a three-year war. Three days later, the South Korean capital of Seoul fell to the North Koreans. President Truman immediately ordered U.S. air and sea forces to "give the Korean government troops cover and support."

The conflict lasted until July 27, 1953. The United States suffered 54,246 battle deaths and 103,284 wounded.

Tensions had festered since the Korean peninsula had been divided into a Communist North and a non-Communist South in 1945. With the partition, 10 million Koreans were separated from their families.

For three months, the United States was unable to stop the communist advance. Then, Douglas MacArthur successfully landed two divisions ashore at Inchon, behind enemy lines. The North Koreans fled in disarray across the 38th parallel, the pre-war border between North and South Korea.

The initial mandate that the United States had received from the United Nations called for the restoration of the original border at the 38th parallel. But the South Korean army had no intention of stopping at the pre-war border, and on Sept. 30, 1950, they crossed into the North. The United States pushed an updated mandate through the United Nations, and on Oct. 7, the Eighth Army crossed the border.

By November, U.S. Army and Marine units thought they could end the war in just five more months. China's communist leaders threatened to send combat forces into Korea, but the U.S. commander, Douglas MacArthur, thought they were bluffing.

In mid-October, the first of 300,000 Chinese soldiers slipped into North Korea. When U.S. forces began what they expected to be their final assault in late November, they ran into the Chinese army. There was a danger that the U.S. Army might be overrun. The Chinese intervention ended any hope of reunifying Korea by force of arms.

General MacArthur called for the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff to unleash American air and naval power against China. But the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army General Omar Bradley, said a clash with China would be "the wrong war, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy."

By mid-January 1951, Lt. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway succeeded in halting an American retreat 50 miles south of the 38th parallel. A week and a half later, he had the army attacking northward again. By March, the front settled along the 38th parallel and the South Korean capital of Seoul was back in South Korean hands. American officials informed MacArthur that peace negotiations would be sought.

In April, President Truman relieved MacArthur of his command after the general, in defiance of Truman's orders, commanded the bombing of Chinese military bases in Manchuria. The president feared that such actions would bring the Soviet Union into the conflict.

The Korean War was filled with lessons for the future. First, it demonstrated that the United States was committed to the containment of communism, not only in Western Europe, but throughout the world. Prior to the outbreak of the Korean War, the Truman administration had indicated that Korea stood outside America's sphere of vital national interests. Now, it was unclear whether any nation was outside this sphere.

Second, the Korean War proved how difficult it was to achieve victory even under the best circumstances imaginable. In Korea, the United States faced a relatively weak adversary and had strong support from its allies. The United States possessed an almost total monopoly of sophisticated weaponry, and yet, the war dragged on for almost four years.

Third, the Korean War illustrated the difficulty of fighting a limited war. Limited wars are, by definition, fought for limited objectives. They are often unpopular at home because it is difficult to explain precisely what the country is fighting for. The military often complains that it is fighting with one armed tied behind its back. But if one tries to escalate a limited war, a major power, like China, might intervene.

Finally, in Korea U.S. policymakers assumed that they could make the South Korean government do what they wanted. In reality, the situation was often reversed. The South Korean government played a pivotal role in defining military strategy and shaping the peace negotiations. In the end, the United States was only able to extricate itself from the war by making a long-term commitment to the South Korean government in terms of money, men, and materiel.

1. How many Americans were killed or wounded in the Korean War?
2. What was the United States original goal (mandate) in the Korean War?
3. What controversial move did General Mac Arthur endorse?
4. What did Truman do to Mac Arthur? Why?
5. At what line are the North and South divided today?

**Cuba & the Bay of Pigs Incident**

In 1959, rebel leader Fidel Castro toppled Cuban dictator Fugencio Batista. In Washington, Castro told U.S. officials that "The [Cuban] movement is not a Communist movement.... We have no intention of expropriating U.S. property, and any property we take we'll pay for."

The next year, the Soviet Union agreed to provide Cuba with $100 million in credit and to purchase five million tons of Cuban sugar. After President Eisenhower declared that the United States would not allow a regime "dominated by international Communism" to exist in the Western hemisphere, Havana nationalized all banks and large commercial industrial enterprises in Cuba. The United responded by imposing a trade embargo.

In April 1961, a U.S.-sponsored invasion of Cuba led by anti-Castro Cuban émigrés turned into a rout. The members of the invasion force, who had been trained by the CIA in Florida, Louisiana, and Guatemala, were defeated in just three days. On Christmas 1962, the United States traded $53 million worth of medical supplies and food stuff for 1,113 captured invaders and 922 of their relatives.

1. Who led the revolution in Cuba?
2. Who became the biggest partner of Cuba after the revolution?
3. What is an embargo?
4. What happened at the Bay of Pigs?
5. What did America pay to get the “invaders” back?

**The Cuban Missile Crisis**

In October 1962, the Soviet Union and the United States went eyeball-to-eyeball and were on the brink of nuclear war.

Surveillance photographs taken by a U-2 spy plane over Cuba revealed that the Soviet Union was installing intermediate-range ballistic missiles. Once operational, in about 10 days, the missiles would need only five minutes to reach Washington, D.C.

President Kennedy decided to impose a naval blockade. Soviet freighters were steaming toward Cuba. The president realized that if the ships were boarded and their cargoes seized, the Soviet Union might regard this as an act of war.

Soviet Premier Khrushchev sent a signal that he might be willing to negotiate. In exchange for the Soviets agreeing to remove the missiles, the United States publicly pledged not to invade Cuba and secretly agreed to remove its aging missiles from Turkey.

After the Cuban Missile Crisis, Cold War tensions eased. In July 1963, the United States, the Soviet Union, and Britain approved a treaty to halt the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, in outer space, and under water. The following month, the United States and Soviet Union established a hotline providing a direct communication link between the White House and the Kremlin.

1. What did spy plane photos reveal in 1962?
2. How long would a missile, fired in Cuba, take to hit Washington D.C.?
3. What is a blockade?
4. What did we give up to get the missiles out of Cuba?
5. What happened between the Whitehouse and the Kremlin as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis?

**The Space Race**

In October 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, the world's first artificial satellite. The 184-pound, 22.5-inch sphere orbited the earth once every 96 minutes. Sputnik transmitted radio signals for 21 days and later burned up in the earth's atmosphere. A second Sputnik, launched in November 1957, carried a dog named Laika. This satellite weighed a thousand pounds.

In December, the United States made its first attempt at a satellite launch. A Navy Vanguard rocket, carrying a payload only one-fortieth the size of Sputnik, lifted a few feet off of its launch pad before falling back to earth. It exploded in a ball or orange flames and black smoke. Premier Khrushchev boasted that "America sleeps under a Soviet moon." Because Sputnik was launched on an intercontinental ballistic missile, Soviet leaders cited it as proof that they could deliver hydrogen bombs at will.

Sputnik's launch meant that the Cold War competition between the Soviet Union and the United States would take place, not only on earth, but also in outer space. Americans, who thought of themselves as the world's technology pacesetters, felt vulnerable; a sensation that was reinforced in 1959, when the Soviet Union fired the first rockets to circle the moon and brought back pictures of its dark side. In April 1961, the Soviets launched the first manned spaceship into orbit, piloted by 27-year-old Soviet Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin. In 1966, the Soviets were the first to land an unmanned vehicle on the moon.

Sputnik led Congress to pass a series of massive federal aid-to-education measures. Science became a priority in schools and universities. Soviet space successes led President John F. Kennedy to tell a joint session of Congress in May 1961 that the United States would land a man on the moon and bring him home by the end of the 1960s.

The U.S. space program passed through several stages. There were six one-man flights in the Mercury program, which expanded from suborbital flights to an orbital mission that lasted more than 34 hours. The Gemini program followed with ten two-man flights, including the first spacewalk and the rendezvous and docking of two spacecraft. One mission lasted 14 days.

Then disaster struck. In January 1967, a fire destroyed a prototype command module, killing the crew of Apollo 1. Four manned flights in late 1968 and early 1969 paved the way for a historic launch of Apollo 11. The launch was witnessed by a million people assembled along Florida's beaches.

At 4:17 p.m. Eastern time, July 20, 1969, astronaut Neil Armstrong announced: "Houston...the Eagle has landed." The landing vehicle had less than a minutes worth of fuel remaining. The astronauts spent only two-and-a-half hours walking on the lunar surface.

Eight years after President Kennedy had called on the United States to land a man on the moon, the mission had been successfully accomplished. A total of 400,000 American employees from 20,000 companies had worked directly on the Apollo program. The cost was $25 billion.

Today, more than half of all Americans are too young to remember that historic mission. At the Johnson Space Center in Houston, a Saturn V rocket--bigger than a 40-story building--lies on the ground. It is not a mockup. It was intended to carry Apollo 18 to the moon. But due to budget cutbacks, the mission was never carried out.

1. What was the first event in the “Space Race”?
2. What happened when the US made their first attempt to launch a satellite?
3. How did the space race affect education in the United States?
4. Who became the first man to walk on the moon? When?
5. What happened to Apollo 18?

**Overview of the Vietnam War**

Vietnam was the longest war in American history and the most unpopular American war of the 20th century. It resulted in nearly 60,000 American deaths and in an estimated 2 million Vietnamese deaths. Even today, many Americans still ask whether the American effort in Vietnam was a sin, a blunder, a necessary war, or whether it was a noble cause, or an idealistic, if failed, effort to protect the South Vietnamese from totalitarian government.

Between 1945 and 1954, the Vietnamese waged an anti-colonial war against France, which received $2.6 billion in financial support from the United States. The French defeat at the Dien Bien Phu was followed by a peace conference in Geneva. As a result of the conference, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam received their independence, and Vietnam was temporarily divided between an anti-Communist South and a Communist North. In 1956, South Vietnam, with American backing, refused to hold unification elections. By 1958, Communist-led guerrillas, known as the Viet Cong, had begun to battle the South Vietnamese government.

To support the South's government, the United States sent in 2,000 military advisors--a number that grew to 16,300 in 1963. The military condition deteriorated, and by 1963, South Vietnam had lost the fertile Mekong Delta to the Viet Cong. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson escalated the war, commencing air strikes on North Vietnam and committing ground forces--which numbered 536,000 in 1968. The 1968 Tet Offensive by the North Vietnamese turned many Americans against the war.

The next president, Richard Nixon, advocated Vietnamization, withdrawing American troops and giving South Vietnam greater responsibility for fighting the war. In 1970, Nixon attempted to slow the flow of North Vietnamese soldiers and supplies into South Vietnam by sending American forces to destroy Communist supply bases in Cambodia. This act violated Cambodian neutrality and provoked antiwar protests on the nation's college campuses.

From 1968 to 1973, efforts were made to end the conflict through diplomacy. In January 1973, an agreement was reached; U.S. forces were withdrawn from Vietnam, and U.S. prisoners of war were released. In April 1975, South Vietnam surrendered to the North, and Vietnam was reunited.

Consequences

* The Vietnam War cost the United States 58,000 lives and 350,000 casualties. It also resulted in between one and two million Vietnamese deaths.
* Congress enacted the War Powers Act in 1973, requiring the president to receive explicit Congressional approval before committing American forces overseas.
1. How many Americans died in Vietnam? How many Vietnamese died?
2. What political ideologies are fighting in Vietnam?
3. Who does the US support in this fight?
4. What is Vietnamization?
5. What is the War Powers Act?