



Timeline of World War II

Includes key dates related to the U.S. Army 4th Armored Division

- **March 22, 1933:** Dachau is established as the first German concentration camp to incarcerate political opponents.
- **September 1, 1939:** Germany invades Poland, initiating World War II in Europe.
- **September 17, 1939:** The Soviet Union invades Poland from the east.
- **April 9, 1940-June 9, 1940:** Germany invades Denmark and Norway.
- **May 10, 1940-June 22, 1940:** Germany attacks Western Europe — France and the neutral Low Countries. Luxembourg is occupied on May 10, the Netherlands surrenders on May 14, and Belgium surrenders on May 28.
- **June 22, 1941:** Nazi Germany invades the Soviet Union in "Operation Barbarossa."
- **October 15, 1941:** Implementation of what later became known as "Operation Reinhard," the physical annihilation of the Jews residing in the General Government.
- **December 7, 1941:** Japan launches a surprise attack on the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, severely damaging the fleet.
- **December 8, 1941:** President Franklin D. Roosevelt asks the U.S. Congress to declare war on Japan following the previous day's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.
- **December 8, 1941:** Killing operations begin at the Chelmno killing center, located about 30 miles northwest of Lodz.
- **December 11-13, 1941:** Nazi Germany and its Axis partners declare war on the United States.
- **January 20, 1942:** The Wannsee Conference is held in a villa outside of Berlin. The "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" is discussed by key officials from the German State and Nazi Party.
- **March 1, 1942:** The Inspectorate of Concentration Camps opens a second camp at Auschwitz, called Auschwitz-Birkenau or Auschwitz II.
- **June 6, 1944:** D-Day, under the code name Operation "Overlord": U.S., British, and Canadian troops land on the beaches of Normandy, France, on the English Channel coast east of Cherbourg and west of Le Havre.
- **December 16, 1944:** The German military launch the "Battle of the Bulge."
- **January 27, 1945:** Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz, finding approximately 7,000 prisoners left behind in the main camp and its subcamps.
- **March 7, 1945:** U.S. troops cross the Rhine River at Remagen, Germany, leaving no more natural barriers blocking the advance into central Germany.
- **April 4, 1945:** The 4th Armored Division and the 89th Infantry of the Third U.S. Army liberate Ohrdruf. The Ohrdruf camp was a subcamp of the Buchenwald concentration camp, and the first Nazi camp liberated by U.S. troops. After visiting Ohrdruf a week later, General Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered careful documentation of the atrocities perpetrated in the Nazi concentration camps, so that no one in the future could deny that they had committed these atrocities. The discovery of the Ohrdruf camp opened the eyes of many U.S. soldiers to the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis during the Holocaust.
- **May 2, 1945:** German units in Berlin surrender to Soviet forces.
- **May 7-9, 1945:** German armed forces surrender unconditionally in the West on May 7 and in the East on May 9, 1945: Allied forces proclaim May 8, 1945 to be Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day). Soviet forces proclaim May 9, 1945 as the day the war ended.