1917

Military events
Naval events
Aviation events
Political events
Social events

JANUARY

19 — German Foreign Secretary, Arthur Zimmerman, 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

1 — 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 — Germany begins a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare

3 — Public campaign launched in Britain to encourage people to eat less bread as a result of shortages

7 — USA breaks off diplomatic relations with Germany as a result of the resumed submarine campaign

24 — Kut al Amara recaptured as part of a new British offensive in Mesopotamia aimed at reaching Baghdad

25 — 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

1 — 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 — British government approves the creation of a National War Museum in London. Lobbyed to the Imperial War Museum in December, to reflect the efforts of people from across the Empire)

11 — Baghdad captured by British forces in Mesopotamia

12 — Start of the first revolution in Russia

15 — Tsar Nicholas II abdicates as ruler of Russia. The Provisional Government assumes power.

26 — 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.

29 — 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 — First members of the WAAC arrive in France

APRIL

3 — Lenin arrives back in Russia by a sealed train allowed to pass through Germany from Switzerland

6 — United States of America declares war on Germany and sides with the Allies

9 — Battle of Arras. British forces advance over 5km (3½ miles) on the opening day. The Canadians seize Vimy Ridge. Fighting continues until 4 May with increasingly heavy casualties.

16 — 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 — Second Battle of Gaza. British troops in Palestine are heavily defeated by Turkish forces in a renewed attempt to break through.

24 — First Battle of Doiran. At Salonika, Allied troops launch an attack as a prelude to a wider spring offensive in the Balkans. Continues until 27 May.

29 — Outbreak of mutinies in French army units at Châlons-sur-Marne following their recent heavy casualties and defeat. Indiscipline continues until October.

MAY

10 — To combat the German submarine threat, British introduce the convoy system, moving large numbers of merchant ships together under naval protection

15 — General Robert Nivelle replaced in command of the French armies by General Philipe Pétain

18 — US Congress passes a bill to recruit half a million men for war service

21 — Imperial War Graves Commission formally established in London. Becoming the present Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1960

25 — First daylight aeroplane raid on Britain by German Gotha bombers

JUNE

7 — 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 — Battle of Ortigara. Italians launch disappointing attack on the Austro-Hungarians on the Trentino front in the Alps. Continues until 29 June.

13 — Daylight raid on London by 18 German Gotha bombers kills 157 people and injures 432

17 — Portuguese troops see action on the Western Front for the first time

29 — First contingent of US troops arrives in France

30 — General Sir Edmund Allenby takes over command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force from General Sir Archibald Murray

30 — 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

6 — An Arab force from the Hejaz guided by T.E. Lawrence captures the Red Sea port of Aqaba

6 — Conscription bill passed by the Canadian parliament

7 — Daylight Gotha bomber raid on London kills 57 people

14 — Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg replaced as German Chancellor by Georg Michaelis

17 — British royal family changes its name from Saxe-Coburg Gotha to Windsor

31 — Third Battle of Ypres begins, popularly known as Passchendaele. Fighting continues until 10 November.

AUGUST

1 — Heavy rain falls across the Ypres battlefields for almost the whole month, preventing any progress

1 — Pope Benedict XV makes another appeal for peace

3 — Mutiny in the German High Seas Fleet at Wilhelmshaven

6 — Alexander Kerensky becomes Prime Minister of Russia

20 — French launch a new attack at Verdun and recapture more ground lost the previous year

SEPTEMBER

3 — Germans capture Riga on the Baltic coast using their new 'stormtrooper' tactics

11 — One of the French air force's leading fighter aces, Captain Georges Guynemer, shot down and killed in Belgium

20 — Battle of the Menin Road Ridge. Renewed attack by British, Australian and New Zealand troops towards Passchendaele begins steady advances in dry weather.

29 — German Gotha bombers start night raids on London

OCTOBER

18 — Last German airship raid on London

24 — Battle of Caporetto. Austro-Hungarians and Germans break through the Italian lines on the Isonzo and force a retreat of 145km (90 miles). 300,000 Italian prisoners are taken. Fighting carries on until 10 November.

26 — Second Battle of Passchendaele. British and Canadian troops begin the final assault on the village.

31 — Third Battle of Gaza. Led by Allenby, British troops, combined with an Australian attack at Beersheba, finally breaking through Turkish lines in Palestine

NOVEMBER

2 — British government issues the Balfour Declaration, supporting the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine

7 — Second Russian Revolution. Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, seize power and overthrow the Provisional Government

10 — Third Battle of Ypres ends with the capture of Passchendaele village

12 — 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 — Georges Clemenceau becomes Prime Minister and Minister of War in France

20 — Battle of Cambrai. Using tanks, aircraft and artillery a major advance is made into the Hindenburg Line.

30 — Germans launch strong counter-attacks at Cambrai and recapture almost all the ground they had lost

DECEMBER

9 — Jerusalem taken by the British forces in Palestine, ending 673 years of Turkish rule

15 — Bolshevik government in Russia signs an armistice with the Germans, suspending hostilities on the Eastern Front