

# Zimmerman telegraph impact and summary



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The Zimmerman Telegraph was the catalyst that threw the United States into World War I. In the Zimmerman Telegraph, the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs sends to the German Minister of Mexico a telegram stating that they want Mexico to become their ally and in turn Mexico would regain their lost territory from the United States (Zimmerman, 1917). This caused the American public, who were against the war, to become enraged and want to join the fray.

The historical context of this document is that the United States was trying to stay out of World War I, and the general consensus of Americans did not want the United States to go to war. However, with the finding of this telegram Americans became outraged and wanted to join the war. Many historians say that without the telegraph the United States would not have joined the war. The primary source document, being the Zimmerman Telegraph, is contextually important to this time due to the fact that without it being found the United States might not have gone to war.

The Zimmerman Telegraph is a piece of text sent from the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to the German Minister of Mexico. It was sent in 1917, and its purpose was to gain an alliance with Mexico. A summary of this document is that the Germans were going to start unrestricted submarine warfare the 1<sup>st</sup> of February. The document also went to state that if the United States became un-neutral that they would ally themselves with Mexico, and in turn they would help Mexico retake their original territories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The document closed by <https://assignbuster.com/zimmerman-telegraph-impact-and-summary/>

saying that the President of Mexico should also reach out to Japan to enter the war as an ally as well (Zimmerman, 1917).

This source was incredibly important when it was uncovered. Due to this document, the United States entered World War I. This source is also important because it showed how important intelligence gathering is and was during wartime. Due to Britain having a deciphering means for the German cipher, they were able to accurately break the encryption on the telegram. This priority on intelligence has been a main focus during war times. The evidence that this provides for the society that produced it was that the Germans were terrified of the United States entering the war. We can see this due to the fact that they did not want America to join the war, and if they were to join they wanted Mexico to be an ally to help fight the United States (Zimmerman, 1917). The consequences of send the telegram and the telegram being deciphered was the United States entered World War I. Because the United States entered the war, the Allies were able to defeat the Germans and their own allies.

The evaluation that I give to this primary sources is that it was an extremely important intelligence victory for the Allies. Due to the uncovering of the telegram, the United States was able to make sure Mexico did not attack them. As well due to the outrage of the American public, the United States entered World War I. What I inferred from the document was that the Germans were scared of America. They were terrified of the United States entering the war, because they knew of the power that Americans troops would bring to the fight. This is why they were going to try and get Mexico to attack American soil. Due to the efforts of the intelligence professionals

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who discovered the telegram, the war took a turn for the best for the Allied armies.

#### Primary Source Document

1. Zimmermann, Arthur. 2009. "Zimmermann Telegram, 1917."

Zimmerman Note, 1917 1. Points of View Reference Center, EBSCOhost (accessed March 19, 2017). <https://proxy.nvc.alamo.edu:4443/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pwh&AN=21213051&site=eds-live>

#### Primary Source Document

Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917, Supplement I, p. 147-148

The Ambassador in Great Britain (Page) to the Secretary of State London, February 24, 1917, 1 p. m.

[Received 8: 30 p. m.]

5747. My 5746, February 24, 8 a. m. For the President and the Secretary of State. Balfour had handed me the text of a cipher telegram from Zimmermann, German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to the German Minister of Mexico, which was sent via Washington and relayed by Bernstorff of January 19. You can probably obtain a copy of the text relayed by Bernstorff from the cable office in Washington. The first group is the number of the telegram, 130, and the second is 13042, indicating the number of the code used. The last group but two is 97556, which Zimmermann's signature. I shall send you by mail a copy of the cipher text and of the decode into German and meanwhile I give you the English translation as follows:  
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We intend to begin on the 1st 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.

The receipt of this information has so greatly exercised the British Government that they have lost no time in communicating it to me to transmit to you, in order that our Government may be able without delay to make such disposition as may be necessary in view of the threatened invasion of our territory.

Early in the war, the British Government obtained possession of a copy of the German cipher code used in the above message and have made it their business to obtain copies of Bernstorff's cipher telegrams to Mexico, amongst others, which are sent back to London and deciphered here. This

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accounts for their being able to decipher this telegram from the German Government to their representative in Mexico and also for the delay from January 19 until now in their receiving information. This system has hitherto been a jealously guarded secret and is only divulged now to you by the British Government in view of the extraordinary circumstances and their friendly feeling towards the United States. They earnestly request that you will keep the source of your information and the British Government's method of obtaining it profoundly secret, but they put no prohibition on the publication of Zimmermann's telegram itself.

The copies of this and other telegrams were not obtained in Washington but were brought in Mexico.

I have thanked Balfour for the service his Government has rendered us and suggest that a private official message of thanks from our Government to him would be beneficial.

I am informed that this information has not yet been given to the Japanese Government but I think it not unlikely that when it reaches them they may make a public statement on it in order to clear up their position regarding the United States and prove their good faith to their Allies.

The Essential Documents of American History was compiled by Norman P. Desmarais and James H. McGovern of Providence College.