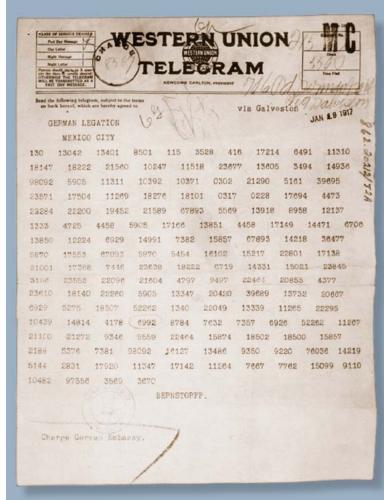
## PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY: THE ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM

One of the motivators for the U.S. to enter World War I was a secret telegram from German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann to the German Minister to Mexico. This telegram was intercepted and deciphered by the British in January 1917. The following month, the British released the telegram to President Woodrow Wilson, and the contents were published widely in newspapers. Americans were shocked to learn that Zimmermann had tried to convince Mexico to join Germany in the war effort in return for U.S. territory Germany believed Mexico could seize from the U.S.



## TRANSCRIPT OF ZIMMERMANN TELEGRAM (1917)

(Decoded message text of the Zimmermann Telegram) From 2nd from London # 5747.

"We intend to begin on the first 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 or 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.

Citation: Zimmermann Telegram, 1917; Decimal File, 1910-1929, 862.20212/82A (1910-1929), and Decoded Zimmermann Telegram, 1917; Decimal File, 1910-1929, 862.20212/69, General Records of the Department of State; Record Group 59; National Archives. To view the telegram in digital format visit:

www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=60

## **DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS**

- 1. What does the telegram reveal about Germany's plans regarding submarine warfare?
- 2. What role does Zimmermann want Mexico to play in World War I?

  Do you think Mexico would have agreed to this plan if given the opportunity?
- **3.** Why do you think the Zimmermann telegram provoked the U.S. to enter World War I? What were some of the other factors that contributed to the U.S. declaring war against Germany in April 1917?

## **ACTIVITY**

After analyzing the telegram as a class or in small groups, ask students to respond to question #3 in essay format.

