

President	Dwight D. Eisenhower
Chronological Order	34
Life Span	1890-1969
Home State	Kansas
Elected	1952, 1956
Political Party	Republican
Vice President	Richard M. Nixon
First Lady	Mary (Mamie) Doud Eisenhower
Children	2 sons
Physical Attributes	5'11" tall, solidly built, sandy gray hair (balding), blue eyes
Undergraduate Education	U.S. Military Academy
Military Service	Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe during WW II
Profession	Soldier
Other Political Offices	None
Nickname	Ike
Family Lineage	German
Religious Affiliation	Presbyterian



Biographical Notes

1. Eisenhower's slogan during the 1952 presidential campaign was "I like Ike," and most people who met him did. He was confident, friendly, outgoing, and had an infectious grin that put people at ease. But he had a serious side as well. He was extremely intelligent and an excellent leader and organizer. He had a ferocious temper, which he mostly kept in check. As president, the American people trusted him because they felt he was decent, honest, and always had their best interests in mind.

Eisenhower described his politics as "a liberal attitude towards the welfare of the people and a conservative approach to the use of their money."

2. Eisenhower was one of the most popular presidents of modern times and was often referred to as a "father figure" for the nation. He ended the Korean War, maintained peace during the Cold War, fathered the Interstate Highway System, built the St. Lawrence Seaway, handled the Suez Crisis deftly, and worked hard to keep defense costs down despite strong opposition.

On the negative side of the ledger, Eisenhower did not provide leadership regarding the civil rights of African Americans when he had the opportunity to do so. His "hands-off" approach encouraged segregationists, and substantive progress in this area was delayed until the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Also, Eisenhower was overly fond of using the CIA to perform covert operations to affect foreign governments. These actions set a dangerous and troubling precedent for subsequent presidents.

3. Eisenhower, the third of six brothers, grew up in Abilene, Kansas. His father was a mechanic at a creamery. According to Ike, "I have found out in later years we were very poor, but the glory of America is that we didn't know it then. All that we knew was that our parents — of great courage — could say to us, 'Opportunity is all about you. Reach out and take it.'" During Ike's formative years, Abilene was not a very diverse town; virtually everyone was white, Christian, Republican, and of European descent.

As a boy, sports were very important to him, and it was in sports that he first discovered his talents as a leader and an organizer. He organized the Abilene High School Athletics Association, which operated independently of the school system. He wrote to schools in the area to make up the schedule for the games

and had his team ride on freight trains to go to away games.

Ike was a running back on the U.S. Military Academy football team when he was a sophomore in college. After leading his team to victories over Stevens Institute and Rutgers, the *New York Times* described him as "one of the most promising backs in Eastern football" and published a two-column photograph of him punting. In the game against Colgate, the West Point yearbook reported that "Eisenhower in the fourth quarter could not be stopped." But in the game against Tufts, Ike sprained his knee badly. Then he injured it further — causing cartilage and tendon damage — in a horsemanship drill at West Point. The injury ended his playing career, but he kept involved in football by coaching the junior varsity team.

4. Eisenhower entered the U.S. Military Academy in 1911 and graduated in the middle of his class in 1915. There were two reasons he did not excel academically.

First, the method of instruction at West Point was archaic, and the instructors were inadequate. Rote memorization masqueraded as creative thought. Instructors, almost all of whom were recent West Point graduates, rarely explained the material or encouraged critical discussions. Eisenhower had no patience for the excessive memorization that posed as academic achievement and rebelled against it. He almost failed a class called Military History — a subject in which he later became an expert — because he was supposed to remember ridiculously minute facts about the Battle of Gettysburg.

Second, Eisenhower loved playing football — he was usually the first cadet at practice and the last to leave — and the abrupt end of his playing career due to his knee injury affected him profoundly. Later in life, Ike said:

I have often wondered why, at that moment, I did not give increased attention to studies. Instead, as the academic record attests, I gave less. I was almost despondent and several times had to be prevented from resigning by the persuasive efforts of classmates. Life seemed to have little meaning; a need to excel was almost gone.

During World War I, much to his chagrin, Eisenhower was stationed in the United States and did not see combat.

5. After graduating from West Point, Ike was assigned to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. Less than a month after his arrival, he met and immediately fell in love with Mary (Mamie) Doud, the daughter of a wealthy Denver, Colorado, family who wintered in San Antonio. Like Ike, Mamie was an extrovert: full of life, flirtatious, and the center of any social gathering. The attraction was mutual. Mamie later said, "He was a bruiser. He was just about the handsomest male I have ever seen." Ike found Mamie's outgoing personality and delicate looks enchanting, and he proposed on Valentine's Day 1916. They were married on July 1, 1916.

Ike and Mamie's first child, Doud Dwight Eisenhower, was born in September 1917. He looked just like Ike, so everyone called him "Ikey." When Ikey was three years old, the Eisenhowers hired a woman to help with household chores, and — unbeknown to them — she had just recovered from a bout of scarlet fever. Ikey caught the illness from her and died on January 2, 1921. "I have never known such a blow," Ike wrote long afterward. "I didn't know what to do. I blamed myself because I had often taken his presence for granted."

Ikey's death left a permanent scar on the couple. Eisenhower, for the rest of his life, sent Mamie a bouquet of yellow roses every year on Ikey's birthday. Yellow was the little boy's favorite color. But the marriage was not the same. They blamed themselves and each other, and now the youthful romance was gone. Instead of drawing closer, Ike and Mamie retreated into a world of private sorrow. "Half a century later," wrote Julie Nixon Eisenhower, "Mamie was unwilling to say much about how Ikey's death changed her relationship with Ike."

Ike and Mamie had one other child, John S. D. Eisenhower, who was born in 1922. John graduated from West Point and became a brigadier general, diplomat, and military historian.

6. After World War I, the United States formed two tank brigades at Fort Meade, Maryland: a brigade of light tanks commanded by George S. Patton and a brigade of heavy tanks commanded by Eisenhower. Ike and Patton were a mismatched pair. Patton was monumentally egotistical, flamboyant, and unpredictable. Ike was self-effacing, straightforward, and steady. Patton came from a very wealthy family; Ike certainly did not.

They bonded over their love of tanks. "From the beginning, he and I got along famously," Ike said. "Both of us were students of current military doctrine. Part of our passion was a strong belief in tanks — a belief derided at the time by others." Patton and Ike believed so strongly in tanks that they (separately) wrote articles for the *Infantry Journal* advocating for the greater use of tanks. Eisenhower was summoned to

Washington and told that if he wrote any more such articles, he would be court-martialed. Patton received a similar warning. Patton became the most famous Allied tank commander of World War II.

Besides tanks, both men loved sports. Eisenhower had been a football player at West Point, and Patton finished fifth in the modern pentathlon at the 1912 Summer Olympic Games. At Fort Meade, Ike coached the football team, and Patton coached the equestrian and pistol teams. Their friendship was severely tested during World War II when Ike had to discipline Patton twice.

7. Patton introduced Ike to Brigadier General Fox Conner – a military thinker and strategist who wielded vast power under the cloak of general staff anonymity. Many considered him to be the most influential officer in the Army. During World War I, Conner served as chief of operations for General John J. Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces; he masterminded American successes in two key battles. Eisenhower later said, “Fox Conner was the ablest man I ever knew.”

Conner became Eisenhower’s mentor. When Conner was given command of a brigade in the Panama Canal Zone, he chose Ike to be his executive officer. Under Conner’s tutelage, Eisenhower became a student of military history. Conner had an extraordinary library, and Ike took full advantage of it when they lived in adjacent houses in Panama. He studied the Civil War, Napoleon’s campaigns, and Frederick the Great’s victories. He read Clausewitz’s *On War* three times. Ike said, “Clausewitz has those maxims. He [Conner] would make me tell what each one meant.”

After Eisenhower’s three years in Panama, Conner engineered the first big break of Ike’s career when he got him assigned to the Command and General Staff Training School in 1925.

8. In August 1925, the Army selected 245 of the best officers in the Army for the Command and General Staff Training School (CGSTS), a ten-month course in which they competed in war games using case studies. Before going, Eisenhower asked George Patton for his notes from his time at the CGSTS – Patton finished 25th out of 248 officers in the Class of 1923-24. According to Mamie, Ike studied the notes “to tatters.” He also obtained copies of lesson plans and problems from previous years and worked through them, checking his answers against the approved solutions. He found that the work came easily and that he enjoyed it.

The curriculum was designed to discover who had mastered the material and could function under severe stress. Mornings were devoted to classes and afternoons to solving hypothetical problems. The problems were the core of the curriculum, and a clear head was essential for success. Eisenhower wrote: “If you are mentally fatigued or too stuffed up with facts and figures, it is almost certain a poor mark will result. I established a routine that limited my night study to two hours and a half, from seven to nine-thirty. Mamie was charged with the duty of seeing that I got to bed on time.”

Students were encouraged to form study groups, and most did. However, Eisenhower thought group study was too cumbersome and decided to work with only his best friend at the school, Leonard (“Gee”) Gerow. The course brought out the best in Ike: his ability to master detail without getting bogged down, his talent for translating ideas into action, his positive reaction to pressure, and his sense of being a team player. When the final grades were posted, Ike finished first, and Gee finished second.

9. After the CGSTS, Eisenhower was assigned to write a guidebook to American World War I battlefields under the supervision of General John J. Pershing, the commanding general of the American forces in that war. Eisenhower’s *A Guide to the American Battle Fields in Europe* is a complete history, battle by battle, of the American war effort on the Western Front (Belgium and France). Two hundred of the book’s 282 pages concisely summarize the fighting.

Writing a history of the battles on the Western Front gave Eisenhower a feel for its geography and an understanding of the problems involved in coordinating the Allied armies. For example, he treats the logistical problems of the American forces in detail. It is difficult to imagine a more useful assignment for the future Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe during World War II than to write a history of the analogous American effort in World War I. The substantive knowledge of the war on the Western Front he derived from this exercise stood him in good stead when he commanded the Allied effort seventeen years later.

10. After working with Pershing, Eisenhower worked for General Douglas MacArthur, the Army’s chief of staff. Ike was MacArthur’s chief of staff for three years in Washington, then four years in the Philippines, where they organized and trained the Army of the Philippine Commonwealth. The two men were extremely different. MacArthur was brilliant but vain and egotistical – he often referred to himself in the third person. They frequently disagreed, but as the junior officer, Eisenhower had to carry out the general’s orders.

Eisenhower loyally served MacArthur even when it meant dispersing the "Bonus Marchers," a group of unemployed veterans of World War I who protested in Washington, D.C., during the Great Depression.

When Eisenhower became Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe during World War II, his leadership style was completely different from MacArthur's. MacArthur insisted on being the center of attention; Ike emphasized teamwork. MacArthur liked to come up with ideas himself; Ike delegated significant responsibilities to smart subordinates he believed could get the job done.

11. On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, and the United States entered World War II. Five days later, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall summoned Eisenhower to Washington to join the War Plans Division of the Army General Staff.

When Ike arrived, he was told that Marshall wanted to see him immediately. At their meeting, Marshall summarized the bleak situation in the Pacific and told Ike that the evidence indicated that the Japanese intended to overrun the Philippines as rapidly as possible. Then, knowing Ike's familiarity with the situation in the Philippines, he asked him, "What should be our general line of action?" Ike thought for a few seconds and then said, "Give me a few hours." Three hours later, Ike gave Marshall a clear, concise briefing on the situation:

General, it will be a long time before major reinforcements can go to the Philippines, longer than the garrison can hold out with any dribble of assistance if the enemy commits major forces to their reduction. The people of China, of the Philippines, of the Dutch East Indies will be watching us. They may excuse failure, but they will not excuse abandonment. We must do what we can. Our base must be Australia, and we must start at once to expand it and secure our communications to it. We must take great risks and spend any amount of money required.

Marshall replied, "Eisenhower, this department is filled with able men who analyze their problems well but feel compelled to always bring them to me for a final solution. I must have assistants who solve their own problems and tell me later what they have done. The Philippines are your responsibility. Do what you can to save them." Two months later, Marshall made Ike Head of the War Plans Division.

12. In June 1942, Marshall sent Eisenhower to London and made him commander of all the American forces (ground, naval, and air) in the European Theatre of Operations. In London, Ike got along well with the British leaders, especially Churchill, and coordinated the American and British efforts in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. Consequently, he was chosen to be the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces for Operation Overlord, the invasion of Europe that began on D-Day. The operation was the largest amphibious assault in history, with the largest air and sea armadas ever assembled.

Operation Overlord was a resounding success, and Eisenhower remained Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe for the rest of the war. He was superb in this role. His patience, fairness, and ability to get along with people strengthened the alliance between the American and British military forces. He dealt effectively with generals ranging from the ultra-aggressive American George S. Patton to the deliberate Briton Bernard L. Montgomery. He showed a deft political touch in his dealings with FDR, Churchill, Stalin, and Charles de Gaulle (France).

13. Eisenhower did not draw up the plans for the D-Day invasion; that was done over two years by a team led by British General Frederick Morgan. But he did change the plan in three significant ways. First, the original plan called for the Allied forces to hit the beaches with three divisions. Eisenhower and Montgomery, who would oversee the ground troops, insisted that this was insufficient manpower and demanded five divisions instead. Second, Eisenhower added an airborne component to the invasion. Specifically, he added landings by two American airborne divisions on the extreme right of the attack (i.e., the western edge) and one British airborne division on the left. These men were dropped in by parachute the night of June 5-6, and they sealed off the beaches from flanking attacks by the Germans as the other Allied forces were coming ashore.

Third, Ike made sure that the French railway system was decimated by Allied bombers before D-Day so that the Germans would have great difficulty moving their troops to the locations where they were needed. This result was not easy to achieve. Initially, General Arthur Harris (head of the Royal Air Force Bomber Command) and General Carl Spaatz (the commanding officer of the U.S. Eighth Army Air Force) refused to give Ike their bombers for the period he wanted (the two months before D-Day) because they wanted to bomb Germany instead. And Churchill agreed with them. Eisenhower told Churchill that if his bosses [FDR and Churchill] refused to fully commit to Operation Overlord by holding back the bombers, he would "simply have to go home." Ike's threat to quit worked — he got complete control of the planes — and by D-Day, the

Allied bombing had reduced railroad traffic in France by forty-five percent.

14. Many factors contributed to the success of Operation Overlord, but Eisenhower knew that the most important would be the willingness of the infantrymen to come running out of their landing crafts in the face of German fire to win the beaches of Normandy. For that reason, Eisenhower spent much of his pre-D-Day time visiting the troops. He wanted them to see the man sending them into battle and tried to speak with as many of them as he could. From February 1 to June 1, 1944, Ike visited twenty-six divisions, twenty-four airfields, five warships, and numerous other installations. He would have the men break ranks and gather around him while he made a short speech; then, he began talking to them individually.

His first question was almost always, "Where are you from?" He wanted to know about their families, what they did back in the States, and what they planned to do after the war. Unlike many generals, Ike did not view them as just soldiers; he thought of them as citizens who were caught up in a war none of them wanted but which they knew had to be won. Ike's face would light up when he met a boy from Kansas; he kept hoping to find one from Abilene but never did. The soldiers came to know that Ike cared about them, and that made a big difference when the bullets started flying.

Eisenhower's concern for his men stayed with him for the rest of his life. When he returned to Normandy in 1964 with Walter Cronkite to film the television special "D-Day Plus 20," Cronkite asked him what came to mind from returning to the D-Day landing site. Ike said that he could never come to this spot without feeling thankful that he and Mamie had grandchildren since many couples had no grandchildren because their only child died here.

15. The most challenging decision Eisenhower had to make during World War II was when to launch the D-Day invasion. The main problem was that the weather in the English Channel was very unpredictable. Two days before the date planned for the attack — June 5, 1944 — a severe storm rolled in, which ruled out June 5 and left June 6 in question. The postponement of June 6 would cause a dangerous two-week delay during which the Germans might notice the massive build-up of Allied forces in England.

At 9:45 p.m. on June 4, Eisenhower had to make the call during a driving rainstorm. His RAF weatherman, Captain J. M. Stagg, told him that tomorrow (June 5) would see periods of gradual clearing over southern England and the invasion beaches and that conditions would improve considerably during the night of June 5, enabling the bombers to operate and the airborne operations to take place. He predicted that the weather would be good on the morning of June 6 but that later that day it would start to deteriorate again. Some of Eisenhower's subordinates wanted to launch the invasion; some — especially his air force commanders — did not.

Eisenhower gave the order to launch, and the weather, while far from perfect, was good enough for the invasion to proceed successfully. Some people attributed the success of his decision to "Eisenhower luck," but luck had nothing to do with it. For a month before June 4, Ike had made time in his busy schedule to meet with Captain Stagg for fifteen minutes every day. He would hear Stagg's prediction for the next few days, then ask him what he was basing his prediction on. By the time Ike had to make his decision, he knew that he could trust Stagg's judgment. The Allies caught the Germans flat-footed on D-Day because the German meteorologists did not notice the small window of good weather predicted by Captain Stagg.

16. In April 1945, Ike entered the Nazi concentration camp at Ohrdruf, near the notorious camp at Buchenwald. Later, he described what he had seen:

The things I saw beggar description. The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick. In one room, where they were piled up twenty or thirty naked men, killed by starvation, George Patton would not even enter. He said he would get sick if he did so. I made the visit deliberately in order to be in a position to give *first-hand* evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to 'propaganda.'

17. When Eisenhower returned home from Europe, he was not a wealthy man — after all, he had always earned just a military salary and did not come from a wealthy family. His economic status changed when he wrote his World War II memoir, *Crusade in Europe*, in 1948. For tax purposes, he accepted a one-time payment of \$635,000, of which he was able to keep almost half a million dollars.

Crusade in Europe was both a critical and financial success. It was called the best American military memoir since Grant's. Reviewers praised Ike for his modesty, candor, fairness, and tact. The book has gone

through many editions and has been translated into twenty-two languages.

18. In May 1948, after finishing *Crusade in Europe*, Ike took a month's vacation at the Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Georgia, as the guest of Bill Robinson, an executive with the *New York Herald-Tribune* who had helped arrange Ike's book deal. Here, he met six men who became his closest friends for the rest of his life. The "Gang," as he referred to them, were all millionaires and Republicans (with one exception) who loved to play golf, play bridge, and talk politics. From then on, Ike sought their advice on politics, economics, and finance. To the end of his life, he spent as much time with them as he could spare; with them, he could relax as with no one else. The members of the Gang were Robinson, who was friends with almost every influential East Coast Republican; Clifford Roberts, a well-known investment banker who took charge of Eisenhower's investments; Robert Woodruff, chairman of the board of Coca-Cola; Pete Jones, president of Cities Service Corporation; George Allen, a close friend of Truman and a member of the Democratic National Committee; and Ellis Slater, president of Frankfort Distilleries.

The Gang made Eisenhower a member of the Augusta National Golf Club, built him a cottage there, and put in a fishpond stocked with bass for his private use. When Eisenhower bought a farm near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Pete Jones bought three adjacent farms so that Ike's farm would be protected from encroachment. Every member of the Gang had his own circle of rich and powerful friends; through the Gang, Ike met on a social and private basis innumerable members of America's business, financial, publishing, and legal elite, many of whom later became staunch Eisenhower-for-President supporters.

19. The U.S., Canada, and ten Western European nations formed NATO in 1949, and Truman asked Eisenhower to be its Supreme Commander with offices in Paris. The position was perfect for Ike. He would be in daily working contact with the heads of government of Western Europe, which would advance his image as a statesman. He could renew his friendships with British and French leaders and meet the new West German leaders. Most importantly, he believed strongly in NATO's mission as a counterbalance to the Soviet Union's Communist domination of Eastern Europe. Eisenhower remained the Supreme Commander of NATO until he became a candidate for president in 1952.

20. Eisenhower was not a professional politician and initially did not want to run for president in 1952. However, three things convinced him to do so. First, his brother Milton convinced him it was his duty to run. It was well-known that Truman would seek re-election only if Ike did not run. Consequently, if Ike did not run, it would be Truman vs. isolationist Republican Robert A. Taft, and Milton knew Ike did not want either of them to be president.

Second, Eisenhower became convinced that the American people wanted him to run. In the summer of 1951, Eisenhower's Gang and several Republican financiers created Citizens for Eisenhower, a volunteer organization. This group oversaw and encouraged the numerous Ike Clubs that sprang up around the country, and Ike was truly moved when he saw a movie of one of their rallies.

The third (and most convincing) reason for running was put to Ike directly by Bill Robinson: "In no circumstance could you ever avoid the burden of worry over the country's future course, and there would seem to be fewer frustrations for the leader than there would be for the commentator."

21. At the 1952 Republican National Convention, the two leading candidates for the presidential nomination were Eisenhower, a moderate, and "Mr. Republican," Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio, an Old Guard conservative. A fundamental problem arose before the first ballot. Texas and some other southern states had produced two sets of delegates: one loyal to Ike and another loyal to Taft. Eisenhower prevailed in the ensuing floor fight over credentials and won the nomination on the first ballot, 845 to 280.

Eisenhower's first important decision was the selection of a running mate. The criteria were that the man should be a card-carrying member of the Old Guard who was nonetheless acceptable to the moderates; a prominent anti-communist; an energetic and vigorous campaigner; relatively young to offset Ike's age; from the West to balance Ike's association with the East; and a contributor to Ike's winning the nomination. Only one man satisfied all these criteria — Senator Richard Nixon of California.

The United States Army of the 1950s was a draftee army. There were no college deferments, and young men from all classes of American life were called into service. Consequently, the grimness of the Korean War struck home hard, and the country wanted out. However, the Democrats appeared to have no plan for ending the conflict. Two weeks before the election, Eisenhower electrified the nation when he declared that immediately after the election, he would "concentrate on the job of ending the Korean War ... That job requires a personal trip to Korea. I shall make that trip."

This promise helped propel Eisenhower to the presidency. He defeated Democrat Adlai Stevenson in the

general election, 442 to 89 electoral college votes. Ike won all but nine of the forty-eight states.

22. The 1952 presidential campaign got nasty. J. Edgar Hoover leaked uncorroborated FBI field reports about Stevenson from the agency's raw files. Stevenson was alleged to: (a) have been arrested in Illinois and Maryland for homosexual offenses; (b) be one of the "best-known homosexuals in the state of Illinois"; (c) be known to his intimates as "Adeline"; and (d) be listed on the FBI card file of sexual deviants. Most newspaper editors and national columnists were aware of the allegations and dismissed them as unsubstantiated hearsay.

Even though the charges were unsubstantiated, Republican Senator Joe McCarthy planned a national broadcast and let it be known that he would attack the Stevenson campaign as being full of "pinks, punks, and pansies." The Democrats responded with the nuclear option. White House aides let it be known that if McCarthy portrayed Stevenson as a homosexual, they would leak General Marshall's 1945 letter to Eisenhower harshly criticizing Ike's plan to divorce Mamie and marry Kay Summersby, his beautiful female British driver during World War II. (Eisenhower did not go through with the plan.) McCarthy backed down, and his broadcast was relatively innocuous. Ike was furious at Truman when he heard about the Democrats' threat. The relationship between the two men remained strained until they reconciled at JFK's funeral in 1963.

23. Eisenhower traveled to Korea before his inauguration. He visited the front-line troops and talked to commanders and their men. He took a reconnaissance flight along the length of the front – essentially the 38th parallel – in a small artillery spotter plane. Ike saw the terrain was mountainous, rocky, snow-covered, and desolate. He learned that the North Koreans and Chinese had developed formidable defensive positions supported by tunnels.

The American commander in Korea, General Mark Clark, and the president of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, wanted to launch an attack on North Korea. However, Eisenhower felt that "small attacks on small hills will not win this war" and that a major offensive probably would not have the necessary American and world support and might bring an unwelcome response from the Soviet Union.

Eisenhower shrewdly allowed North Korea and Communist China to fear that he might use the atomic bomb against them if they did not agree to end the fighting. Consequently, the armistice that had eluded Truman was signed six months into Eisenhower's first term. The agreement was one of Eisenhower's most significant achievements as president and one of the things he was most proud of. The armistice is still in place today; no peace treaty has ever been signed.

24. At the beginning of his first term, Eisenhower invited members of Congress to a series of dinners at the White House to introduce himself to them. (Thomas Jefferson did the same thing.) Between February and May of 1953, 527 senators and members of Congress dined with him. The dinners were such a success that late in 1953, he began hosting a series of private stag dinners in the White House for sixteen or so guests at a time, bringing together men from various professions and different parts of the country whom he had read about and wanted to meet. Eisenhower said, "I used these dinners to try to draw from leaders in various sections of American life their views on many domestic and international questions. The stag dinners were, for me, a means of gaining information and intelligent opinion as well as enjoying good company." The dinners were usually held monthly and sometimes as often as once a week.

Ike expected everyone to contribute something meaningful to the conversations. Businessmen addressed trade and taxes; ranchers expressed their opinions on government land policies; engineers discussed the latest trends in technology; and educators expressed their concerns. Sometimes, Ike floated a trial balloon on a topic, say foreign aid, and then sat back and listened. This was a management technique he had perfected during the war. As the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, he would ask members of his staff to present solutions to strategic questions: as each made his case, Ike would listen, synthesize their arguments, and then make his decision.

Once word got out about the president's "secret dinners," people wanted to be invited. And when a group of Republican women objected to being excluded, the president invited them to a series of breakfasts. During his presidency, Eisenhower hosted more than 700 guests at 49 stag dinners or breakfasts.

25. Eisenhower's cabinet consisted primarily of wealthy businessmen, not Washington insiders or professional politicians. The lone exception was Secretary of Labor Martin Durkin, the plumbers and steamfitters union president. The press characterized the cabinet as "Eight Millionaires and a Plumber."

Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson was one of the twelve apostles of the Mormon Church. He

suggested that the weekly cabinet meetings be opened with a prayer because "I know that without God's help, we cannot succeed. With his help, we cannot fail." Eisenhower asked Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to poll the group, and it agreed to have a prayer but a silent one. The arrangement worked well until a cabinet meeting at which a preoccupied Ike forgot about the prayer and launched straight into the first item on the agenda. When an aide slipped him a note, pointing out the omission, Ike blurted out, "Oh, God damn it! We forgot the silent prayer!"

26. In 1953 and 1954, Senator Joe McCarthy used his chairmanship of a Senate committee to conduct a "witch hunt" for Communist sympathizers in government positions. Ike despised this behavior but did not speak out against McCarthy (when many felt that he should) because he felt that a confrontation would give the senator the notoriety he craved. Instead, he worked behind the scenes to make things difficult for McCarthy.

The two eventually clashed publicly when the senator began investigating the Army and threatened to subpoena members of the executive branch. Ike ordered all employees of the executive branch not to testify or submit any documents or other evidence to McCarthy's committee. He justified this action by proclaiming the principle of "executive privilege." In a letter to his secretary of defense, he stated that executive departments were to furnish Congress with complete information about their policies, but they were *not* to disclose "conversations, communications, and documents" about how and why those policies had been reached "because it is essential to efficient and effective administration that the employees of the Executive Branch be in a position to be completely candid with each other on official matters." Congress accepted this principle, and without the power to subpoena government records or employees, McCarthy's investigations ground to a halt.

27. Eisenhower appointed five Supreme Court justices while president, including Chief Justice Earl Warren. Warren was an unusual choice because he was a politician — a three-term governor of California and the 1948 Republican nominee for vice president — not a professional jurist. Warren served as chief justice until 1969, and the "Warren Court" turned out to be much more liberal than Eisenhower expected it to be. It ruled — unanimously — against public school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954). It established criminal defendants' rights in *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) and required, in criminal cases, that the state provide an attorney for defendants who cannot afford one.

28. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled — in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* — that "separate but equal" public schools, then operated in seventeen southern and border states, were "inherently unequal" and thus unconstitutional.

Eisenhower refused to endorse the decision publicly or privately. He also declined to say that segregation was morally wrong. That allowed bitter-end segregationists to claim that Eisenhower was secretly on their side, which they said justified their tactics. Chief Justice Warren and many others thought that one word from Eisenhower would have made a smoother transition period possible.

Some years later, Eisenhower said, "I believe the decision [in *Brown*] was wrong," and that the Supreme Court should have required only "equal opportunity" rather than integration. This stance reflected his background and attitudes. Ike was six years old when *Plessy v. Ferguson* established the doctrine of "separate but equal," and he had lived under it his whole life. There were no African Americans in Abilene during his boyhood and none at West Point during his college years. Eisenhower spent most of his pre-World War II years at army posts in the South or in the Panama Canal Zone or the Philippines, where the racism was even worse than in the United States. During the war, he commanded a segregated army; after the war, many of his friends were from the South.

29. Before World War II, Vietnam was a French colony. During the war, Japan took control of the country from the French; the nationalist Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh, opposed both French and Japanese rule. When the war ended, Japan surrendered to the Chinese Nationalist Army in the northern part of Vietnam and to the British Army in the southern part.

After the war, France wanted to regain control of its former colony, but the Viet Minh wanted independence for Vietnam. In the north, the Chinese Nationalists left the Viet Minh in control when they left, but Great Britain, which had its own colonies, ceded control of the south to the French. In September 1946, the French-Indochina War broke out between the Viet Minh and the French for control of Vietnam.

The Truman administration decided to support France (financially) during the French-Indochina War because the Viet Minh was a Communist organization. By 1950, Communist China had defeated Nationalist

China and occupied mainland China. Consequently, the French-Indochina War turned into a conflict between two armies equipped with modern weapons: the French, supplied by the United States, and the Viet Minh, supplied by the Soviet Union and trained in guerrilla tactics by Communist China.

Concerning Vietnam, Ike was of two minds. On the one hand, he believed in the "domino principle" – if one Southeast Asian country fell to communism, this would set off a chain reaction whereby all would fall. On the other hand, Ike did not want American troops fighting in Vietnam because we had just gotten out of Korea. Also, he recognized that it would take a massive number of troops to make any difference in Vietnam. So, he continued to supply arms to France but refused to send in American soldiers or airplanes, even when the French were losing the final battle of the war at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954.

After Dien Bien Phu, France, the United States, the Viet Minh, Communist China, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain met in July at the 1954 Geneva Conference to settle the French-Indochina War. The Geneva Conference agreement temporarily separated Vietnam into two zones: a northern zone governed by the Viet Minh and a southern zone governed by the State of Vietnam, which former Nguyen dynasty emperor Bao Dai headed. The agreement also provided that a general election be held by July 1956 to create a unified Vietnamese state. The United States and the State of Vietnam refused to sign the final agreement, even though they had helped negotiate it. Eventually, the State of Vietnam refused to participate in the proposed general election because it knew the Viet Minh would win the nationwide vote. The Viet Minh was Communist; the State of Vietnam was not.

In October 1955, a referendum on the State of Vietnam's future form of government was held; it was marred by widespread electoral fraud. It resulted in the deposal of Bao Dai by his Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem, who proclaimed himself president of the new Republic of Vietnam (a.k.a. South Vietnam). Eisenhower immediately recognized the new state and offered it military, economic, and technical assistance. Ike also dispatched American soldiers to South Vietnam as military advisors. Eventually, their number rose to 900. In November 1955, the Vietnam War began between North Vietnam, supported by Communist China and the Soviet Union, and South Vietnam, supported by the United States.

30. Eisenhower was the first president to use the CIA to wage covert wars against foreign governments. He used the CIA to overthrow democratically elected leaders in Iran and Guatemala. Ike gave the CIA permission to assassinate Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the agency was complicit in his overthrow and death. These episodes heralded a dark American record that would unfold in subsequent decades – subverting governments, supporting despots, and exerting clandestine force, all in secret, much of it in the name of anti-communism. Eisenhower's appetite for covert action started the nation down this slippery slope.

In 1951, Iranian public opinion clamored for a renegotiation between their government and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) because the current agreement gave Iran only sixteen percent of the AIOC's vast profits. The British government – the majority owner of the AIOC – refused to renegotiate because it used its share of the company's profits to balance the national budget. A movement to nationalize the AIOC arose in Iran – led by Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh – and the Iranian parliament voted unanimously for nationalization in May 1951. After the vote, Great Britain threatened to invade Iran, but President Truman objected strongly, and the British backed down.

When Eisenhower took office, his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, and CIA director, Allen Dulles, felt differently than Truman. Both were adamant anti-communists and former corporate lawyers who viewed nationalization as a step toward communism. They convinced Eisenhower to green light a joint CIA/British SIS covert operation that engineered the 1953 overthrow of the democratically elected Mossadegh and replaced him with the Shah of Iran, who ruled as a despot for the next twenty-six years. The Shah's reign spawned the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which brought to power the passionately anti-American theocracy now in power. (N.B. John Foster and Allen Dulles were brothers.)

In Guatemala, the United Fruit Company (UFCO), an American company, owned forty-two percent of the arable land, was exempt from all taxes and duties, controlled the country's only port and its electrical and transportation systems, and owned the telephone and telegraph facilities. Most of its vast acreage was kept idle to avoid flooding the market with bananas and driving the price down. In 1951, Jacobo Arbenz was elected president, running on a platform demanding land reform. In 1952, the Guatemalan National Assembly enacted legislation to redistribute idle land held by large landowners. Owners were to be compensated at the property value determined by the owner's tax declaration for 1952. (N.B. The term "banana republic" was coined with Guatemala and Honduras in mind.)

American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and CIA Director Allen Dulles were former UFCO lawyers who owned substantial blocks of the company's stock. They convinced Eisenhower there was communist influence driving the land reform proposals (there was not), and the CIA launched a covert operation that

overthrew the Arbenz government in 1954. The new government returned all the confiscated land to UFCO and the other elite landlords. Guatemala has struggled to maintain a stable government ever since.

Eisenhower's love of covert operations originated in the military intelligence the Allies gained by cracking the Enigma cyphering systems used by the German Army, Navy, and Air Force during World War II. The human intelligence gathered by the members of the French resistance also helped. The Enigma cryptanalysis enabled Eisenhower to read substantial amounts of Germany's radio and teleprinter communications, which resulted in decided advantages on the battlefield. As Supreme Commander, Ike found this information invaluable and always sought similar advantages as president.

31. Eisenhower became interested in establishing a U.S. interstate highway system because of two prior experiences. First, he was part of the 1919 Army Motor Transport Convoy, which took 56 days to travel from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco, California (approximately 3,000 miles). The absence of decent roads, especially west of the Mississippi River, where some "highways" were two-lane dirt roads that turned to rivers of mud when it rained, made the trip extremely difficult. Sometimes, trucks sunk down in the mud to their axles and had to be dug out. In addition, many bridges had to be reinforced or repaired so the Army vehicles could traverse them safely.

Second, Ike had the *opposite* experience in Germany during World War II. There, the Allied forces used the Reichsautobahn, 2,400 miles of excellent roads built by the German government, to pursue the German Army across the country. Eisenhower studied the Reichsautobahn because it played an integral role in the planning of Allied maneuvers. He was amazed at how helpful it turned out to be. Ike also noted that, unlike many American roads, which were two-lane, the Reichsautobahn typically had four lanes – two in each direction, separated by a central median.

Consequently, as president, Eisenhower championed the creation of what has become known as the Interstate Highway System – the network of multiple-lane highways that now spans the United States. He recognized that such a system would benefit the economy in peacetime and provide key ground transport routes for the military during times of crisis. Ike also knew constructing such a system would help stimulate the economy and reduce unemployment.

Congress authorized the construction of the Interstate Highway System in 1956, and the original portion was completed thirty-five years later. As of 2022, its length is 48,890 miles, making it the world's second-longest highway system after China's. Ike considered the Interstate Highway System one of the most significant achievements of his presidency.

32. Another large public works project championed by Eisenhower was the St. Lawrence Seaway. The seaway is a system of locks, canals, and channels that allows oceangoing vessels to travel from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes, as far inland as Duluth, Minnesota, at the western end of Lake Superior. The seaway is named for the St. Lawrence River, which flows from Lake Ontario to the Atlantic Ocean.

The project had been on the drawing board for many years, but Eisenhower got the votes necessary to push it through Congress. From the time of Theodore Roosevelt, American presidents had advocated building such a seaway. However, they had been thwarted by the powerful lobbying efforts of American railroads, East and Gulf Coast port authorities, coal mine operators in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, and the United Mine Workers union. Eisenhower, who believed that the project was important for national security and feared that the Canadians would go ahead without American participation, provided the leadership to get it done. Construction of the seaway began in 1954 and was completed in 1959. Since its completion, the seaway has averaged fifty million tons of shipping annually. It provides easy access for the bulk shipping of American grains and minerals from the Midwest to ports abroad.

33. Like everyone else of his generation, Eisenhower had been deeply affected by the intelligence failure that allowed the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. By the 1950s, the advantage of surprise to an attacker with nuclear weapons was infinitely greater. Consequently, Eisenhower wanted information from within the U.S.S.R., especially information about the mobilization of planes or troops. However, as of 1954, the CIA had been unable to place any reliable spy networks inside the Soviet Union.

In early 1954, Ike set up the Surprise Attack Panel to advise him on what to do. A key member was Edwin Land, the inventor of the Polaroid camera. Land reported that new cameras could take detailed photographs at great heights above the Earth. At about the same time, Lockheed proposed a single-engine reconnaissance plane – the U-2 – that could fly long-distance missions at altitudes (70,000 feet) above the reach of Soviet fighter planes, missiles, and radar. Eisenhower okayed the construction of thirty U-2s, and the CIA and DOD split the cost. The CIA began U-2 flights over the Soviet Union in 1956.

As of 2025, twenty-seven U-2 aircraft remain in front-line service, almost seventy years after the plane's first flight. The aircraft that was supposed to replace it, the SR-71, was retired in 1998. The primary usefulness of the U-2 is its ability to address surveillance objectives on short notice, which surveillance satellites cannot do.

34. Ike had a "slightly more than moderate" heart attack in 1955 but recovered quickly and decided to stand for re-election in 1956.

Given Ike's heart history, a significant issue for the campaign was whether Richard Nixon would again be his running mate. Ike initially felt that Nixon, with whom he was not close, needed executive experience and would not get it if he was Vice President for four more years. (N.B. Prior to the Jimmy Carter administration, vice presidents had no administrative responsibilities; they merely presided over the Senate when the vote was close.) Eisenhower offered Nixon any cabinet post he wanted in the new administration (except for secretary of state or attorney general), but Nixon declined; he viewed a cabinet post as a step-down and wished to remain on the ticket. Ultimately, the one person Eisenhower truly wanted as a running mate — Earl Warren — was unavailable because he could not, in good conscience, be asked to step down from his position as chief justice to run for vice president. Nixon remained on the ticket, and Eisenhower defeated Adlai Stevenson for a second time, 457 to 73 electoral votes.

35. In July 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Nasser recognized Communist China and purchased arms from Czechoslovakia, another Communist country. In retaliation, the U.S. and Great Britain withdrew their promised support from Nasser's massive Aswan Dam project on the Nile River. Nasser responded by nationalizing the Suez Canal, promising to devote its profits, which had been going to British and French stockholders, to building his dam. Upon seizing the Suez Canal, Nasser forbade the passage of Israeli ships. He also blockaded the Israeli port of Eilat to prevent the passage of Israeli ships through the Straits of Tiran, thus denying Israel access to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Nasser's seizure upset the British government, the majority owner of the canal, and the French private firms who owned canal stock.

On October 29, Israel attacked Egypt by advancing across the Sinai Peninsula. Immediately after, as part of a secret plan arranged with Israel, Great Britain and France told Egypt and Israel that unless both sides withdrew ten miles from the canal and permitted British-French occupation of critical parts of it, they would take the canal by force to keep the two sides apart. Israel, of course, agreed. (If the plan worked, Israel would get the Sinai, and Britain and France would have the canal.) Egypt did not agree to the proposal and sank forty ships in the Suez Canal to make it impassable. One week later, Great Britain and France landed troops in Egypt.

The Israeli invasion and the British-French ultimatum caught the U.S. by surprise. Great Britain and France assumed that the U.S. — their World War I and World War II ally — would acquiesce to this plan, but to his great credit, Eisenhower did not. To him, the plot reeked of nineteenth-century colonialism of the worst sort; it was devious; and it directly violated the 1950 Tripartite Declaration between the U.S., Great Britain, and France, which stated that the three countries were committed to maintaining the status quo in arms and borders in the Middle East.

At Eisenhower's request, America's U.N. ambassador went to the U.N. General Assembly and proposed a resolution to deal with the crisis. It called for an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of all forces behind previous armistice lines, an arms embargo, and the reopening of the Suez Canal, which was now blocked. The resolution passed; the vote was 64 in favor and 5 opposed (Great Britain, France, Israel, Australia, and New Zealand). Also, behind the scenes, Ike exerted tremendous financial pressure on Great Britain to get it to back down. The ceasefire went into effect with the British troops just a few miles from the canal, which remained under Nasser's control.

The introduction of the American resolution in the U.N. was one of the great moments in the U.N.'s early history. Eisenhower's insistence on the U.N.'s primacy, treaty obligations, and the sovereign rights of Egypt increased America's standing in world opinion — especially in the Middle East.

36. In 1957, the Little Rock, Arkansas, school board adopted a plan to gradually integrate the city's schools. The first step was to register nine Black students at Central High. Governor Orval Faubus objected to attempting this because he felt it could not be done safely, and a state court agreed. Federal Judge Ronald N. Davies ruled that the state court had no jurisdiction and ordered the desegregation to proceed as planned.

On September 4, the students attempted to enter Central High to register. However, they found it surrounded by 250 members of the Arkansas National Guard dressed in battle gear and under orders from Faubus to prevent them from entering. An unruly mob of more than 500 white demonstrators shouted

obscenities at the students, and the students were denied entry. On Friday, September 20, Judge Davies ordered Faubus and the commander of the Arkansas National Guard to cease further interference with his desegregation order. Over the weekend, the troops were withdrawn.

When Central High opened on Monday, it was ringed by well over a thousand angry white protesters determined to prevent the students from entering. Police barriers initially kept the crowd at bay, and the students slipped in through a side door. But the crowd continued to grow and was in an ugly mood. Out-of-state journalists were assaulted, and the police lines were breached at eleven-thirty a.m. Demonstrators stormed into the school, and the police decided to remove the Black students for their protection. The rioting continued; the crowd grew to more than fifteen hundred, and local authorities could no longer contain it. The Little Rock mayor sent a telegram to Eisenhower asking for help. "The mob that gathered was no spontaneous assembly," he told Ike. "It was agitated, aroused, and assembled by a concerted plan of action." He said that allies of Faubus had organized the mob and that "Governor Faubus was at least cognizant of what was going to take place."

Eisenhower sent 1,100 U.S. Army paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division out of Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to Little Rock. They flew into the city in an armada of C-130s. The soldiers restored order, and the students were enrolled. This was only the third time in American history that a president employed the U.S. military to suppress domestic violence. George Washington used federal troops during the Whiskey Rebellion, and Grover Cleveland used them to enforce a federal injunction during the 1894 Pullman strike. Eisenhower said that sending in the troops was the hardest decision he'd ever had to make, except for the decision of when to launch for D-Day.

Eight of the nine students graduated from Central High, and one became an assistant secretary of labor in the cabinet of Jimmy Carter. Governor Faubus got what he wanted from the showdown at Central High – he now symbolized Southern resistance to integration. He was re-elected in 1958.

37. The Soviet Union upstaged the U.S. with the launch of *Sputnik*, Earth's first artificial satellite, in October 1957. *Sputnik* was a 24-inch diameter, 184-pound metal sphere with antennas that emitted periodic radio signals; it carried no scientific instruments or military hardware. *Sputnik* caused a great deal of concern amongst Americans because they felt it proved that the U.S. had fallen behind the U.S.S.R. in science and technology. *Sputnik II*, launched in November 1957, was much larger (approximately 3,000 pounds); it carried scientific instruments and a live dog. (N.B. *Sputnik* means "fellow traveler" in Russian.)

Eisenhower's approach to missiles and satellites had been to let each branch of the military develop its missile program and to let the Navy work on satellites. The results were not good. A Navy Vanguard rocket trying to launch a satellite in late 1957 caught fire two seconds after liftoff, fell back to the Earth, and was destroyed. When the *Explorer I* satellite was launched in January 1958, it weighed only 31 pounds.

In response to these shortcomings, Congress passed a bill establishing the National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA) in 1958. The law gave NASA control of all space activities "except for those the President determined were primarily associated with national defense." Eisenhower agreed to the establishment of NASA reluctantly, because he feared its priority on satellites would take resources and scientific talent away from programs aimed at the development of missiles for military purposes.

38. The crises over Little Rock and *Sputnik* took a toll on Eisenhower. In both cases, his steady hand reassured a nation in doubt, but the emotional cost to him was high. Ike had kept his personal feelings bottled up – he always did – and he suffered for doing so.

On November 25, 1957, Eisenhower had a minor stroke while working at his desk at the Oval Office. He had difficulty reading the papers in front of him, could not hold his pen, and could not speak. Ike recovered in a week or so, but he was concerned. This was his third serious illness in three years, and he did not want to cling to the office if he was unable to fulfill his duties. The memory of Woodrow Wilson's last eighteen months in office troubled Ike, and he was especially sensitive to the possibility that he might not recognize his disability.

In an exchange of letters with Vice President Nixon, Eisenhower carefully laid out the circumstances under which the vice president would assume the duties and powers of the presidency.

(1) In the event of inability, the President would – if possible – inform the Vice President, and the Vice President would serve as Acting President, exercising the powers and duties of the Office until the inability had ended.

(2) In the event of an inability which would prevent the President from so communicating with the Vice President, the Vice President, after such consultation as seems to him appropriate under the circumstances,

would decide upon the devolution of the powers and duties of the Office and would serve as Acting President until the inability had ended.

(3) The President, in either event, would determine when the inability had ended and, at that time, would resume the full exercise of the powers and duties of the Office.

Eisenhower also told Nixon that if medical experts agreed that the disability was permanent, he would resign. The above agreement between Eisenhower and Nixon served as the basis for the 25th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified a decade later.

39. Fidel Castro led a revolt against Fulgencio Batista, Cuba's corrupt dictator and a staunch U.S. ally, in 1958. Batista fled on New Year's Day, 1959, and Castro entered Havana triumphantly.

The United States and many other countries quickly recognized the new regime in Cuba, and when Castro appointed Cuban liberals to top posts in the new government, Washington was pleased. But in mid-January, Castro made the Communist Party legal in Cuba. By the end of the month, his first Premier resigned in protest of the executions of Batista supporters and the increasingly anti-American tone of Castro's speeches. Castro then took over as Premier.

By January 1960, Eisenhower and his advisors were determined to do something about Castro. His verbal abuse of the U.S. had reached unprecedented levels, and he had nationalized American businesses, including banks, oil refineries, and sugar and coffee plantations. There were, however, problems in dealing politically with Castro because he was a shrewd politician. In particular, his anti-American diatribes were based on a Latin — as opposed to a communist — critique of Uncle Sam that resonated with many Cubans.

Eisenhower decided to use the CIA to overthrow Castro. On March 17, he met with CIA Director Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell, the CIA agent Dulles had put in charge of preparing a "program" for Cuba. Ike gave the go-ahead for the program Bissell presented to him. It had four parts: (1) the creation of a "responsible and unified" Cuban government-in-exile; (2) "a powerful propaganda offensive"; (3) "a covert intelligence and action organization in Cuba" that would be "responsive" to the government-in-exile; and (4) "a paramilitary force outside Cuba for future guerilla action." Eisenhower indicated that he liked all four parts but emphasized the importance of Bissell's first step, finding a Cuban leader who could form a government that the U.S. could recognize and that could direct the activities of the covert and paramilitary forces.

Bissell's plan never came to fruition during the Eisenhower administration, but he had a 2,000-man paramilitary force of Cuban refugees ready in Guatemala by the time Kennedy became president. The day before JFK's inauguration, he met with Ike and asked his opinion "as to the United States supporting guerilla operations in Cuba even if this support involves the United States publicly." Eisenhower said, "Yes," it should be done because "we cannot let the present government go on." Eisenhower then discussed Bissell's paramilitary force. He suggested that Kennedy's first job would be to find a Cuban to lead a government-in-exile so that he could take control of Cuba after the paramilitary force was sent in.

Kennedy sent Bissell's paramilitary force into Cuba three months after he became President. Castro's armed forces routed it at the Bay of Pigs.

40. In early 1960, relations with the Soviet Union seemed to be improving, and Eisenhower announced that he could accept a treaty banning all nuclear tests in the atmosphere, oceans, outer space, and underground (with a few exceptions). The Soviet Union was interested, and the two countries planned a summit meeting for Paris in May. Prospects for superpower agreement and nuclear peace were the best since the start of the Cold War.

One reason Eisenhower felt comfortable with the test ban was that he had been monitoring the U.S.S.R.'s missile capabilities with photography from the CIA's U-2 spy plane flights over the Soviet Union. Two weeks before the Paris summit, Eisenhower approved one last U-2 flight — and the result was a disaster. The plane was shot down, and Khrushchev, who was furious, publicly accused the United States of flying a spy plane over his territory.

The CIA had assured Eisenhower "that if the plane were to go down, it would be destroyed either in the air or on impact so that proof of espionage would be lacking. ... Self-destroying mechanisms were built in." So, Eisenhower tried a cover-up by claiming that the plane was on a weather mission over Turkey and had accidentally strayed into Soviet air space. Khrushchev countered by producing the pilot and a spool of spy film. This episode ruined any chance for Ike to obtain a nuclear test ban treaty.

41. Ike — the master of logistics during World War II — knew more about what the military needs and how industry fulfills those needs than any other president in American history. Consequently, it is very telling that

in his farewell address to the nation, he emphasized that America must "guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex." He feared that political pressure to buy more expensive weapons systems would bankrupt the American economy, which is precisely what happened to the Soviet Union thirty years later.

42. Eisenhower was a great leader, as a military man and as president. When he was president, on one occasion, his advisors were trying to tell him what to do and how to do it, and he responded adamantly:

Now, look, I happen to know a little about leadership. ... And I tell you this: you do not lead by hitting people over the head. Any damn fool can do that, but it's called 'assault' – not 'leadership.' I'll tell you what leadership is. It's *persuasion* – and *conciliation* – and *education* – and *patience*. It's long, slow, tough work. That's the only kind of leadership I know – or believe in – or will practice.

43. Eisenhower enjoyed cooking and was an excellent cook. His mother insisted that all her sons learn how to cook, and when she was nursing one son through a severe illness, Ike cooked for the family. When he married Mamie, who was from a wealthy family, she did not know how to cook, so initially, Ike did the cooking. On hunting and fishing trips with his buddies, Eisenhower often cooked for the group. As president, while relaxing at his Gettysburg farm, he liked cooking for his family and friends and visiting dignitaries.

See the next page for a list of references.

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