

# SELECTED CHRONOLOGY

**DECEMBER 21, 1938**

German discovery of fission through the work of Lise Meitner and Otto Hahn.

**AUGUST 2, 1939**

Einstein's letter to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), who responds noting creation of the Advisory Committee on **Uranium**.

**JULY 2, 1941**

MAUD report from the British, confirming possibility of an atomic bomb.

**DECEMBER 7, 1941**

Japan attacks Pearl Harbor; the United States enters World War II.

**DECEMBER 18, 1941**

Advisory Committee on **Uranium** restructured into the S-1 Committee, which meets for the first time.

**JUNE 17, 1942**

US Army Corps of Engineers takes over atomic bomb development

**AUGUST 13, 1942**

The Manhattan Project formally created, initially with Colonel James C. Marshall in command.

**SEPTEMBER 17, 1942**

Col. Leslie R. Groves appointed head of the Manhattan Engineer District; promoted to Brigadier General six days later.

**SEPTEMBER 19, 1942**

Oak Ridge selected for **uranium** production.

**NOVEMBER 25, 1942**

Groves selects Los Alamos for site of bomb production. He appoints J. Robert Oppenheimer to head "Project Y" at Los Alamos.

**DECEMBER 2, 1942**

The mass pile at Chicago goes critical, creating the first self-sustaining **nuclear reaction**.

**JANUARY 16, 1943**

Groves designates Hanford, Washington, for location of **plutonium** development.



(Image: US Department of Energy, public domain.)

**AUGUST 7, 1944**

General George C. Marshall receives briefing that states a **uranium** bomb will be ready by August 1, 1945

**SEPTEMBER 27, 1944**

The B reactor at Hanford goes **critical** for the first time, but struggles to maintain consistent chain **reactions**. Scientists manage to achieve consistent **reactions** by December and begin producing **plutonium** by January 1945.

**APRIL 12, 1945**

FDR dies; Harry S. Truman becomes President. Truman briefed on Manhattan Project on April 25.

**APRIL 27, 1945**

The Target Committee meets for the first time and selects seventeen target sites for atomic bombing. The list includes both Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

**MAY 7, 1945**

A "100-ton test," held 800 yards away from the Trinity Test site in Alamogordo, New Mexico, included the detonation of 108 tons of TNT and 1000 curies of reactor **fission** products. This explosion is the largest in history conducted up to this date.

**JULY 11, 1945**

Assembly of the test bomb, "Gadget," begins.

**JULY 14, 1945**

Scientists install the detonators and hoist Gadget to the top of a 100-foot tower. Final test preparations begin.

**JULY 16, 1945**

At 5:29 a.m., the Trinity Test occurs, detonating Gadget at Alamogordo, New Mexico. It is the first atomic explosion in history. The explosion vaporizes the 100-foot steel tower.

**JULY 17, 1945**

President Truman attends the Potsdam Conference and calls for Japan's unconditional surrender, warning the Japanese that they face "prompt and utter destruction." Japanese officials ignore the demand.

**JULY 26, 1945**

Parts for "Fat Man" and "Little Boy" arrive at Tinian Island for assembly.

**AUGUST 6, 1945**

A B-29 bomber called the *Enola Gay* departs Tinian and flies to Hiroshima, Japan. At 8:16 a.m., Little Boy explodes, destroying five square miles of the city.

**AUGUST 9, 1945**

The B-29 bomber, *Bockscar*, departs Tinian and heads toward the initial target, Kokura. Poor visibility leads the pilot to move to the secondary target, Nagasaki. At 11:02 a.m., Fat Man explodes. Six days later, on August 15, the Japanese Empire announces its surrender.