

Seeds of war

The Spanish-American War arose out of [Cuba's](#) wish for independence from Spain. Spanish forces tried to put an end to the idea. They treated harshly any Cubans believed to be disloyal to Spain. Newspapers in the United States, eager to sell copies, regularly ran stories about the suffering. Americans began to demand that something be done.

The United States also had an economic interest in Cuba. Business investments on the island were estimated at 50 million dollars, and trade with Cuban ports was valued at 100 million dollars yearly.

The Maine

Although both the American public and [Congress](#) called on the president to get involved, [Grover Cleveland](#) wanted to stay out of the conflict between Cuba and Spain. The next U.S. president, [William McKinley](#), also did not want to bring the United States into the conflict.

Spain tried to reach an agreement with Cuba in the autumn of 1897, but the offer was rejected. Riots broke out in December, and the United States sent the **battleship *Maine*** to Cuba to protect U.S. citizens and property. On the night of February 15, 1898, a huge explosion destroyed the *Maine*. This event caused Americans to become even angrier. The United States blamed Spain for the explosion and declared war on Spain in April. McKinley decided it was time to become involved.

Maine. The sinking of the United States battleship *Maine* helped cause the Spanish-American War. The *Maine* arrived in Havana, Cuba, on Jan. 25, 1898, to protect American lives and property in case of riots. On Feb. 15, 1898, it blew up, killing about 260 of the crew. A naval court of inquiry concluded that a submarine mine had caused the explosion. The United States accused Spain in this matter because Havana was then a Spanish port. But Spain claimed that an explosion inside the ship caused the disaster. The slogan "Remember the *Maine*" aroused widespread patriotic sentiment in favor of war against Spain.

The sinking of the *Maine* and the start of the Spanish-American War was once one of the most famous battle cries: "Remember the *Maine*!" And it also is a long-unsolved mystery.

When the ship exploded in the Havana Harbor in 1898, 260 sailors went down with it.

Controversy haunted the sinking of the battleship. To this day, it's still unknown who actually sabotaged the ship, or if it was a victim of an accidental coal fire near the ship's munitions storage.

And the explosion, in the midst of a newspaper war between Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, showed that the press could actually start a war.

The bombing incident produced one of the most infamous incidents in journalism history. When illustrator Frederic Remington wired Hearst about leaving Havana after the Maine's explosion, Hearst's return telegram stated, "Please remain. You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war." Hearst stayed true to his promise, using headlines and stories about the sinking of the ship to fire up a war.