U.S. Memorial Day
Basics

Overview

U.S. Memorial Day
Decoration Day
	• **U.S. Memorial Day** – A federal holiday honoring those who died while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces
	  o Originally known as 'Decoration Day'; a day when flowers were used to decorate Civil War graves
	  o In 1868. a national veteran's organization formally established May 30th as 'Decoration Day'
	  o Between 1873-1890, 'Decoration Day' became a state holiday across the U.S.
	  o After WWI, the name 'Memorial Day' began to gradually replace 'Decoration Day'
	  o In 1967, Congress officially designated May 30th as 'Memorial Day' across the United States
	  o In 1971, 'Memorial Day' switched to the last Monday in May (per the Uniform Monday Holiday Act)
	• Memorial Day is also considered the unofficial beginning of summer in the United States

Memorial Day Symbols & Traditions	• **Memorial Day Symbols & Traditions**
	  o ***American Flag***: Flags are flown at half-staff until noon, then at full-staff for the rest of the day
	  o ***Red Poppies***: Red poppies commemorate war dead (inspired by the WWI poem 'In Flanders Fields')
	  o ***Moment of Remembrance***: At 3PM local time, observe a U.S. national moment of remembrance
	  o Visit national military cemeteries and war memorials to honor deceased military members
	  o Place flags at veteran's graves
	  o Attend parades featuring military personnel and veterans
	  o Hold family gatherings & picnics to kick-off the summer and enjoy hard-won national freedoms

Honoring U.S. Service Members

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	Armed Forces Day	*Veterans Day*	*Memorial Day*
U.S. Residents	**Current Service Members**	**U.S. War Veterans**	**Killed in War**
342,000,000 in 2024	**1,300,000** currently serving (0.4%)	**41,900,000** living & dead veterans (11.9%)	**1,354,293** war dead only (0.4%)

U.S. Service Members by War
(Note: The 'top-five' in each category are highlighted)

Major War or Conflict (Cost in 2024 dollars)	Duration & Cost (Years)	U.S. Service Members Involved (Max Deployed)	U.S. Service Member Casualties (Dead amd Wounded)
Afghanistan War [War on Terror] $2.3 trillion	19 years, 10 months 2001 - 2021	8,000,000 100,000 deployed at peak	2,461 dead 20,752 wounded
Iraq War [War on Terror] $2 trillion	8 years, 9 months 2003 - 2011	1,510,000 157,800 deployed at peak	4,431 dead 31,994 wounded
Gulf War $121 billion	7 months 1990 - 1991	694,550 540,000 deployed at peak	294 dead 467 wounded
Panama Invasion $600 million	1 month 1989	27,000 27,000 deployed at peak	23 dead 324 wounded
Grenada Invasion $400 million	2 months 1983	7,600 7,600 deployed at peak	19 dead 116 wounded
Vietnam War $1 trillion	11 years, 5 months 1964 - 1975	8,744,000 543,000 deployed at peak	58,220 dead 153,303 wounded
Korean War $398 billion	3 years, 1 month 1950 - 1953	5,720,000 326,863 deployed at peak	36,574 dead 103,284 wounded
World War II [World Wars] $4.1 trillion	3 years, 8 months 1941 - 1945	16,112,566 12,000,000 deployed at peak	405,399 dead 670,846 wounded
World War I [World Wars] $32 billion	1 year, 7 months 1917 - 1918	4,734,991 2,000,000 deployed at peak	116,516 dead 204,002 wounded
Spanish-American War $10 billion	8 months 1898	306,760 280,000 deployed at peak	2,446 dead 1,662 wounded
American Indian Wars $3.4 billion	26 years 1865 - 1891	106,000 2,500 deployed at peak	3,000 dead (Soldiers & Native Americans)
Civil War $87.2 billion	4 years, 1 month 1861 – 1865	2,213,363 = U, 1,000,000 = C (1,500,000 deployed at peak)	620,000-850,000 dead = U+C 300,000-476,000 wounded = U+C
Mexican-American War $2.4 billion	1 year, 10 months 1846 - 1848	78,718 31,000 deployed at peak	13,283 dead 4,152 wounded
War of 1812 $1.6 billion	2 years, 8 months 1812 - 1815	286,730 35,000 at deployed peak	15,000 dead 4,505 wounded
Revolutionary War $2.75 billion	8 years, 4 months 1775 - 1783	217,000 48,000 deployed at peak	25,000 dead 25,000 wounded

The numbers above are educated estimates based on: Military Times, USAFacts, Al Jazeera, Wikipedia, CRS Reports, Census Bureau, and Statista.
The Indian Wars are technically the longest, but it was not a continuous war (it was fought in separate campaigns of a long period of time).