

# One Hundred and Thirteenth Congress

Jan. 3, 2013-Jan. 3, 2015

## Second Administration of Barack H. Obama

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### Historical Background

Early on the afternoon of April 15, 2013, as spectators gathered to watch runners as they cross the finish-line of the Boston Marathon, a pair of homemade pressure cooker bombs exploded, killing three and injuring over 250 others. The bombs were the work of two brothers, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the sons of Chechen-Avar parents who, after living in the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia, were granted asylum in the United States in the early-2000s because of fears that their Chechen ancestry would subject them to oppression and arrest in Russia. Even as chaos reigned at the scene of the bombing, authorities in Boston were able to procure security camera footage of the bombers. The footage was released to the public on April 18<sup>th</sup> in order to seek help identifying the pair.

Meanwhile, in nearby Cambridge, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) police officer was shot to death while seated in his cruiser. A short while later, the Tsarnaev brothers hijacked a Mercedes Benz SUV belonging to a Chinese national named Danny Meng, who was taken hostage. While the brothers stopped to purchase gas for the stolen SUV and their own Honda Civic, Meng escaped, running to a neighboring gas station, exhorting an employee to contact emergency services. Early the following morning, a police officer in nearby Watertown, MA, recognized the stolen vehicle and the brothers' Honda and a gunfight ensued, during which the brothers detonated several improvised explosives. Police officers in Watertown managed to tackle Tamerlan when he ran out of ammunition, prompting Dzhokhar to charge the men with the SUV, running over his brother and dragging him for several meters down the street, before abandoning the vehicle and Tamerlan, who would be pronounced dead a short while later. A large area of Watertown was closed off and residents told to shelter in place



Barack H. Obama  
*President of the United States*

President Barack H. Obama

House	Senate
Majority Party: Republican (234 seats)	Majority Party: Democrat (53 seats)
Minority Party: Democrat (201 seats)	Minority Party: Republican (45 seats)
Other Parties: 0	Other Parties: Independent (1 seat)
Speaker of the House: John Boehner	Majority Leader: Harry M. Reid

while the search for Dzhokhar continued. That night, a Watertown resident living just outside the cordoned-off area noticed the tarp covering his boat was loose and, upon further investigation, a body lying in a pool of blood in the boat. Investigators closed in on the area and, after a brief exchange of fire, pulled Dzhokhar Tsarnaev from the boat, unarmed and critically injured, with gunshot wounds to the head, neck, hand, and legs. Aside from Tamerlan Tsarnaev, two police officers would be killed during the manhunt for the marathon bombers.

The Boston Marathon bombing seemed to crystallize several issues related to immigration and national security that were at the root of deep divisions in the American electorate. The first specter raised by the bombing was the issue of home-grown terrorism: though immigrants themselves, the Tsarnaev brothers demonstrated no particular religiosity or allegiance to radical Islamism prior to settling in the United States. Their radicalization occurred largely in the United States after exposure to materials and information freely available online. Here, too, the issue of granting political asylum to people originating in countries with a history of political radicalism and violence, came under scrutiny. Though the brothers' parents assimilated into American society with little trouble—the men's father, Anzor Tsarnaev, had in the interim returned to Daghestan, in Russia—their children found their way to identifying with cultural and religious currents to which they might otherwise have no connection while living in the United States. These questions would continue to color the debates around immigration and counterterrorism policy through the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress and on into the 2016 Presidential Election.

During interrogation, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev claimed that the bombing was carried out in response to U.S. actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Tsarnaev insisted that although they were in sympathy with Islamist outfits like al-Qaeda and had used materials provided by al-Qaeda's Yemeni affiliate, they acted alone and had no affiliation with any recognized organization. Questions about how to handle the incarceration and trial of Tsarnaev arose almost immediately, with some prominent lawmakers arguing that he should be treated as an unlawful enemy combatant, which would exempt him from many of the legal protections afforded to him by the Constitution. This was complicated by the fact that Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was granted U.S. citizenship in 2002 (Tamerlan held dual Russian and Kyrgyzstani citizenship at the time of his death). Tsarnaev would ultimately be tried in a civilian criminal proceeding, which began on March 4, 2015 and resulted in his conviction on 30 counts, including the use of a weapon of mass destruction resulting in death. Tsarnaev was sentenced to death by lethal injection on June 24, 2015.

At the beginning of 2013, the U.S. economy was on the rebound after years of recession brought on by the financial crisis of 2008. In his 2013 State of the union address, President Obama acknowledged that the need for further growth and stabilization of the middle class and called for policies intended to spur economic growth.

In April 2014, the cable news network CNN broadcast a report claiming that at least 40 U.S. military veterans died while waiting to receive medical care



Senate Majority Leader  
Harry M. Reid



Speaker of the House  
John Boehner

at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facility in Phoenix, Arizona. The report launched a series of accusations and investigations into an alleged pattern of negligence at VHA facilities with patients being forced to wait much longer than the VHA's own goal of treating patients within 14 days of the desired date for care. Whistleblowers formerly employed at VHA facilities claimed that there were two lists tracking the timeliness of patient care: an official list shared with administrators in Washington that demonstrated compliance with timeliness guidelines, and an accurate, unofficial list that revealed that patients were often forced to wait longer than a year for care. Internal queries conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) found that tens of thousands of patients were forced to wait for extended periods or never received care at all, and that schedulers were pressured to use unofficial lists in order to inflate the agency's compliance rate for timeliness of care. Members of Congress from both the major political parties lobbed accusations at their ideological opponents, but managed to come together in a spirit of bipartisanship to enact the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 in August 2014. The act approached the problem by expanding the options available to veterans seeking care and by granting the Secretary of Veterans Affairs greater latitude in replacing senior Department personnel in response to emergent issues.

On October 1, 2013 the federal government experienced a funding gap leading to a general shutdown which remained in effect until October 17, 2013 when the Continuing Appropriations Act (PL113-46) was signed into law. During this shutdown as many as 800,000 nonessential government employees were furloughed and government spending was drastically reduced. Also during the first session of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Drug Quality and Security Act was approved in November 2013. The Act responded to a 2012 outbreak of fungal meningitis that was linked to a New England compounding pharmacy. The law granted the Food and Drug Administration broadened authority to regulate compounding pharmacies.

During the waning days of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, on November 24, 2014, a hacker collective identifying itself as the "Guardians of Peace" (GOP) released a trove of confidential data purloined from Sony Pictures. The data included confidential personal information for Sony Pictures employees, internal company communications, and digital copies of several as-yet unreleased motion pictures, including a slapstick satire of North Korea about an assassination plot against its young dictator Kim Jong-un called *The Interview*. In the days following the initial data release, GOP issued dire warnings to Sony Pictures of catastrophic consequences should they go through with the coming release of the film. Representatives of North Korea had complained about the film to United Nations earlier, describing it as an act of war, while the U.S. pointed to the Constitutional protections in the United States and the relationship between the government and entertainment industry. As the warnings mounted, theatre operators around the country began removing *The Interview* from their upcoming schedules, citing safety concerns and Sony Pictures ultimately canceled the film's premier. Meanwhile, investigators in the United States concluded that the

hack was carried out by elements of the North Korean government and President Obama ordered new sanctions against the country in response to the affair.

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## War or Peace?

### Activist Russia and Crisis in Ukraine

On the evening of November 21, 2013, thousands gathered in Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev to protest the announcement by the government of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in which he stated that all preparations for Ukraine to enter into an Association Agreement with the European Union were ordered to cease. Instead the country would be pursuing closer links with Russia and its Eurasian Economic Union. The protests, dubbed “Euromaidan,” continued through December and into the early months of 2014, with allied actions springing up in cities throughout Ukraine and worsening clashes with police and security forces coming amidst efforts by the Ukrainian parliament to curb the unrest. Tensions continued to mount, culminating in conflict between protestors and police in Kiev leading to the deaths of 77 activists and 17 police officers with many others suffering injuries in February 2014. On February 22, the Ukrainian parliament voted to remove President Victor Yanukovich from office.

At the root of the conflict in Ukraine were tensions between the Ukrainian-speaking population of the country, largely concentrated in the western part of the country and the capital, Kiev, and the Russian-speaking minority, concentrated in the east along the Russian border and in the Crimean Peninsula. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Ukraine’s independence there had been disagreement over the direction the newly-independent state would turn in conducting its foreign policy. Ethnic Ukrainians, cognizant of the legacy of Russian domination over the country, first under the Tsars of the Russian Empire and then under the Soviet Union, tended to prefer increasing ties with western Europe and the United States, with ethnic Russians more inclined to seek ties with Russia. This was compounded by the sense that Russia, under President and sometimes-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, resented the territorial losses of the breakup of the Soviet Union and sought to revive its ties with the independent former

Soviet republics, often through covert means. Russia was therefore strongly opposed to the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union from the moment it was announced in March 2012. In response, Russia initiated a series of actions aimed at warning Ukraine of the potential consequences of cleaving to Europe and influencing the Ukrainians to abandon the plan, including revamping its customs regulations to block the import of Ukrainian goods.

After the Euromaidan protests and the removal of the pro-Russian Yanukovich from office, pro-Russian protests broke out in the Crimean city of Sevastopol on February 23. A few days later, masked military personnel wearing uniforms from which the insignia had been removed, seized control of the Crimean parliament and other strategic locations throughout Crimea and protestors demanded a referendum on returning Crimea to Russia. On March 16, 2014, a controversial referendum was held, in which voters were given a choice between Crimea seceding from Ukraine and becoming part of the Russian Federation or the restoration of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Crimea and the status of Crimea as part of Ukraine, with 80% of registered voters supporting secession and union with Russia. Meanwhile, in the largely-Russian region of Donbass in eastern Ukraine, pro-Russian activists began an armed rebellion against the government in Kiev, with separatists taking control of key government facilities and declaring the independent Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. Though denied by the government in Moscow, independent witnesses and the U.S. State Department documented weaponry being supplied by Russia to equip the rebellion as well as participation by elements of the Russian security forces. The U.S. responded by enacting sanctions, publicly condemning Russia's actions, and passing the Support for the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014 (PL113-95).

### **National Security Agency (NSA) and Edward Snowden**

In June 2013, beginning with an article in the British newspaper the *Guardian*, details of a covert mass surveillance program being carried out by the National Security Agency (NSA) were published. The reports cited hundreds of thousands of NSA documents provided to journalists by an NSA contractor working for the consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton named Edward Snowden. At the time the first articles detailing the mass surveillance program were published, Snowden was hiding in a hotel room in Hong Kong. As details of his theft and distribution of classified materials surfaced, authorities in the United States scrambled to find a way to bring him back to the United States to face prosecution. In response to overtures from Vladimir Putin's government in Russia, Snowden left Hong Kong on a flight bound for Moscow, where he was granted a year-long temporary asylum, which has been renewed on an annual basis since 2013.

The incident generated conflicting responses among policymakers in the United States. Though there was near unanimous agreement that Snowden's revelations were a criminal act and that the former contractor should face justice, civil libertarians in the Federal government opposed the sorts of mass surveillance detailed in the NSA documents. Debate over the issue

would carry over into the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, which would enact the USA FREEDOM Act in response to the controversy.

### **Rise of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISIL)**

In Iraq, the remnants of the late terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's al-Qaeda in Iraq regrouped, forming the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS, the Islamic State, and Daesh) to continue its Sunni Arab-led insurgency against the Shia Arab dominated government of Iraq and authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan in the country's north. Beginning in January 2014, ISIL militants led a campaign against cities in the country's Sunni Arab heartland in central Iraq, securing control first of Fallujah in Anbar Province. Attacks continued against major cities, including Ramadi, Samarra, and Sulaimaniyah, throughout January. In February, a series of missile attacks and bombings ensued around the country, including in the capital of Baghdad. In April, the militants moved into neighboring Syria, which was reeling from its own civil war at the time, asserting control over cities such as Homs and ar-Raqqa. By June, ISIL had secured control over most of the strategic northern city of Mosul and much of the surrounding Nineveh Province. On June 29, 2014, ISIL announced the formation of a new Islamic caliphate led by ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who was restyled Caliph Ibrahim.

The speed with which ISIL overcame Iraqi government control in major cities and spread through war-torn Syria took the international community by surprise. The situation became even more grim when reports began to surface of life in the new caliphate. In line with their paleo-fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, ISIL began destroying archaeological and religious sites in the cities under their control. In Mosul, the group destroyed the Mosque and tomb of the Prophet Yunus (Jonas). Then, in the Iraqi city of Sinjar, home to several hundred thousand Yazidi Kurds, who practiced an ancient syncretistic religion equated with devil worship according to ISIL's theological worldview, were forced to flee. Tens of thousands of Yazidis fled the ISIL onslaught and sought shelter in the Sinjar mountains, where they were trapped without access to food, water, or medicine. Reports surfaced of ISIL's threat to kill any Yazidis who refused to convert to Islam, with several thousand Yazidi men being executed in Sinjar. In response to the growing crisis, President Obama ordered humanitarian shipments to be airdropped over Mt. Sinjar on August 7 and then the next day he ordered airstrikes against ISIL targets in Iraq.

In his 2013 State of the Union Speech, President Obama referenced the continuing American military involvement in Afghanistan as well as the threats posed by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Africa. He called for North Korea to acknowledge its obligations to the international community to refrain from aggressive actions and for Iran to commit to diplomacy and halt its nuclear projects. Cybersecurity for both government and private systems was given particular emphasis.

### **Renewed Relations with Cuba**

On December 17, 2014, in the final days of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, President Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro announced the inauguration of a process to normalize relations between the two countries for the first time in over 50 years. The agreement called for the lifting of travel restrictions between the country and the reopening of their respective embassies, which had remained shuttered since 1961.

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## **Economic Trends and Conditions**

In both of his annual addresses before the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, President Obama called for policies to spur growth and increase employment as well as reduce the deficit through tax reform and spending cuts. The energy and construction/infrastructure sectors in particular were evoked for their potential to create jobs in his address in 2013. In the following year, while remarking upon the improvements to key economic indicators over the course of his Presidency, the President bemoaned the lack of improvement in the economic condition of Americans at the lower end of the socio-economic scale.

To that end, the President exhorted the Congress to act with him to broaden the nation's economic recovery:

“Our job is to reverse these trends. It won't happen right away, and we won't agree on everything. But what I offer tonight is a set of concrete, practical proposals to speed up growth, strengthen the middle class, and build new ladders of opportunity into the middle class. Some require Congressional action, and I am eager to work with all of you.”

However, acknowledging the antipathy to bipartisan action on the part of the Republican-led House of Representatives and the Democratic-led Senate, the President outlined actions that could be taken on executive initiative alone: “America does not stand still—and neither will I. So wherever and whenever I can take steps without legislation to expand opportunities for more American families, that's what I'm going to do.” The initiatives the President proposed ranged from extending unemployment benefits for workers, to encouraging investment in renewable energy technologies, and policies to encourage educating American workers in the skills that are most highly-sought in a high technology economy.



Sources:

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## Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decisions

*Horne v. Department of Agriculture*, held that farmers taking agricultural commodities to market without the use of a handler, which would allow them to avoid orders under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, can use the Takings Clause to file claims against AMAA fines, [569 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2013)

*Association for Molecular Pathology v. Myriad Genetics, Inc.*, held that naturally occurring DNA segments, even when isolated from the body, cannot be patented because it is a product of nature, whereas artificially created DNA sequences are patent eligible because they are not naturally occurring, [569 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2013)

*Salinas v. Texas*, held that the Fifth Amendment's protection against self-incrimination does not protect an individual's refusal to answer questions asked by law enforcement before he or she has been arrested or given the Miranda warning. A witness must expressly invoke Fifth Amendment privilege, [570 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2013)

*Shelby County v. Holder*, held that Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which contains the coverage formula that determines whether state and local jurisdictions are subjected to federal preclearance from the Department of Justice before implementing any changes to their voting laws or practices based on their respective histories of racial discrimination in voting, is unconstitutional because the coverage formula is based on data over 40-years old and therefore no longer reflective of current societal conditions, [570 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2013)

*United States v. Windsor*, held that restricting U.S. federal interpretation of "marriage" and "spouse" to apply only to opposite-sex unions, by Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), violates the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution and ordered that the federal government must recognize same-sex marriages that have been approved by the states, [570 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2013)

*McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission*, held that the two-year combined limit for campaign contributions set under the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act is too limiting and does little to stop corruption, but rather hinders the democratic process, [572 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2014)



*Schuette v. BAMN*, held that changing a state constitution in order to ban race and sex based discrimination and special treatment in the admissions process of public universities does not violate the Equal Protection Clause, [572 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2014)

*Town of Greece v. Galloway*, held that the invocation of prayer at the start of a legislative session, in this case a town board meeting, is not in violation of the Establishment Clause, [572 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2014)

*Bond v. United States*, held that federal courts should not impede on state's regulation of local issues and that the Chemical Weapons Convention Implementation Act does not apply to cases dealing with the use of toxic substances in a personal, retaliatory act, [572 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2014)

*Lane v. Franks*, held that testimony of employees in federal criminal trials is protected under the First Amendment when that testimony is not a part of the employee's usual job responsibilities, [573 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2014)

*Riley v. California*, held that law enforcement must obtain a warrant in order to search digital information on a device seized from an individual who has been arrested, [573 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2014)

*United States v. Wurie*, held that law enforcement cannot search digital information on a device seized from an individual who has been arrested, [573 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2014)

*McCullen v. Coakley*, held that a Massachusetts law that set up a buffer zone around abortion clinics was in violation of free speech under the First Amendment. It was concluded that while the law is neutral in addressing the content of the speech permitted within the buffer zone, the methods by which that speech is relayed places the burden on the petitioners', who wished to engage in pro-life counseling, right to free speech, [573 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2014)

*National Labor Relations Board v. Noel Canning*, held that the President of the United States is only authorized to appoint public officials when Congress is in recess for a substantial length of time, allowed under the Recess Appointments Clause, [573 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2014)

*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, held that closely-held, for-profit corporations have free exercise rights under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993. In the case of such entities, the requirement of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that employers provide no-cost access to contraception violates the 1993 Act, [573 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2014)

*Conestoga Wood Specialties v. Burwell*, held that family-owned corporations are free to exercise their religious rights under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 and the requirement of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that employers provide no-cost access to contraception violates the Act, [573 U.S. \\_\\_\\_\\_](#) (2014)

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## 2013 Events

- **Jan. 10:** A series of bombings in the Pakistani city of Quetta and in that country's Swat Valley aimed primarily at the country's Shia Muslim community kills more than 100 people
- **Jan. 16-20:** [Thirty-nine international workers and one security guards die in a hostage crisis at a natural gas facility near Aménas, Algeria](#)
- **Feb. 12:** [North Korea \(DPRK\) conducts its third underground nuclear test, prompting global condemnation and a tightening of economic sanctions](#)
- **Feb. 28:** Benedict XVI resigns as pope, the first to do so since Gregory XII in 1415
- **Mar. 5:** [Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez dies](#)
- **Mar. 24:** [Central African Republic President François Bozizé flees to the Democratic Republic of Congo after rebels seize the capital, Bangui](#)
- **Apr. 15:** [Two brothers of Chechen/Avar ancestry explode two bombs near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, killing three and injuring some 260 others](#)
- **Jun. 6:** Intelligence contractor Edward Snowden discloses details of a U.S. government mass surveillance program to new organizations and subsequently flees the country, ultimately winning temporary asylum in Russia
- **July 3:** *Arab Spring* - [Amid mass protests across Egypt, President Mohamed Morsi is deposed in a military coup d'état, leading to widespread violence](#)
- **Aug. 21:** *Syrian Civil War* - [1,429 are killed when the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad launches a chemical weapons strike against rebel-held territory in Ghouta](#)
- **Sep. 21:** [Militants tied to the Somali al-Shabaab Islamist organization attack the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya, killing at least 62 civilians and wounding some 170 others](#)
- **Nov. 21:** Pro-European Union demonstrations begin in Ukraine after President Viktor Yanukovich rejects and economic association with the EU in favor of closer ties to Russia
- **Dec. 15:** Fighting breaks out between ethnic Dinka and Nuer members of the presidential guard in Juba, South Sudan, precipitating a civil war in that country

## 2014 Events

- **Feb.:** [An Ebola virus epidemic begins in West Africa, ultimately infecting at least 28,000 and killing at least 11,000. It is the most severe epidemic of the virus both in terms of number of infections and casualties](#)

- **Feb. 22:** The Ukrainian parliament votes to remove President Viktor Yanukovich from office, after days of civil unrest in which as many as 100 people were killed in the capital Kiev
- **Feb. 26:** [Pro-Russian unrest in Ukraine leads to the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and separatist insurgencies in the eastern Ukrainian Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts](#)
- **Mar. 16-21:** [After a referendum is held on the status of the Crimean Peninsula, Russia formally annexes Crimea](#)
- **Mar. 24:** During an emergency meeting, the United Kingdom, the United States, Italy, Germany, France, Japan and Canada temporarily suspend Russia from the G8 in response to events in Ukraine
- **Mar. 27:** The United Nations General Assembly passes Resolution 68/262, recognizing Crimea within Ukraine's international borders and rejecting the validity of the 2014 Crimean referendum
- **Apr. 7-May 22:** The Donetsk People's Republic declares its independence from Ukraine, followed a month later by the Luhansk People's Republic. The two breakaway regions subsequently declare the formation of Novorossiia, also referred to as the Union of People's Republics
- **May 22:** [The Royal Thai Army overthrows the caretaker government of Niwatthamrong Boonsongpaisan amidst continuing political unrest in the country](#)
- **June 5:** [A Sunni militant group calling itself the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant \(and variously referred to as ISIL, ISIS, the Islamic State and Daesh\) begins an offensive through northern Iraq, aiming to capture the Iraqi capital Baghdad and overthrow the Shia-dominated government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki](#)
- **June 29:** [The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant declares the formation of a Caliphate in the territory under its control in Iraq and Syria](#)
- **Jul. 8-Aug. 26:** [Amid growing tensions between Israel and Hamas following the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers in June and the revenge killing of a Palestinian teenager in July, Israel launches Operation Protective Edge against the Palestinian Gaza Strip, beginning with a series of missile strikes, followed by a ground invasion a week later. In seven weeks of fighting, 2,100 Palestinians and 71 Israelis are killed](#)
- **July 17:** [Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, a Boeing 777 en route to Kuala Lumpur from Amsterdam, crashes in eastern Ukraine after being shot down by an anti-aircraft missile originating in territory controlled by the Russia-allied separatist Donbass People's Militia, killing all 298 people on board](#)
- **Aug. 8:** [The United States military begins an air campaign in northern Iraq to stem the influx of ISIL militants](#)
- **Sept. 18:** Voters in Scotland decide in a referendum to remain in union with the United Kingdom by a small majority
- **Dec. 17:** [U.S. President Barack Obama announces the resumption of normal relations between the United States and Cuba](#)

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## Major Acts

**Drug Quality and Security Act.** Amended the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic act granting the FDA broader latitude in regulating the manufacture of compounded drugs in response to a 2012 outbreak of fungal meningitis linked to a New England compounding pharmacy. Approved Nov. 27, 2013 ([127 Stat. 587, PL113-54](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

**Agricultural Act of 2014.** Reauthorized the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and restructured farm commodity support through expanding crop insurance coverage, adding permanent disaster assistance, and consolidating conservation programs. Approved Feb. 7, 2014. ([128 Stat. 649, PL113-79](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

**Support for the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014.** Provided the government of Ukraine up to \$1 billion in loan guarantees in response to the 2014 Russian military intervention in that country. Approved Apr. 3, 2014. ([128 Stat. 1088, PL113-95](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

**Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014.** Expands the available options for veterans seeking medical care and grants the Secretary of Veterans Affairs greater latitude in firing senior personnel in response to the Veterans Health Administration scandal of 2014. Approved Aug. 7, 2014. ([128 Stat. 1754, PL113-146](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

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