

The Manhattan Project

After reading Einstein's letter in August of 1939, President Roosevelt made the decision to start the Manhattan Project, which would work to develop an atomic bomb. Roosevelt originally wanted to begin work on it to complete an atomic bomb before Germany but towards the end of the war in the Pacific he thought it could be used against Japan.

Scientists already knew how to split an atom, they just had to figure out how to make a chain reaction. In 1942, Enrico Fermi produced the first controlled chain reaction in a laboratory at the University of Chicago.

On July 16, 1945, Manhattan Project scientists tested the first atomic bomb in the New Mexico desert. The effects of the explosion included an enormous crater in the earth and shattered windows up to 125 miles away. One of the bomb's supervisors, J. Robert Oppenheimer, thought of the words in the holy Hindu book, the Bhagavad Gita: "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds."