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CHAIN of COMMAND

Organization can be a lethal enemy of effective action. I just watched a movie about the Pacific theater in WWII. The U.S. submarine commander gives an order which is immediately passed to his subordinates:

CAPTAIN: Commence firing.

LIEUTENANT: Fire 1.

TORPEDO MAN: Fire 1.

YEOMAN: 1 fired, sir.

While this sequence takes about 4 seconds, the actual firing takes about 3 seconds.

Each second matters in battle. To save the submarine and all aboard, what if this sequence needed to take only 1 second? This would require violating the chain of command; the one who fires the torpedoes needed to take immediate unilateral action. How many times has the chain of command itself caused U.S. deaths in wartime?