Welcome to Kent State University and our May 4 Visitors Center. As this learning facility transports you to one of the most turbulent times in American history, it will provide an accurate and balanced account of the history that happened here. In the process, we offer compelling evidence of the never-ending need to appreciate and protect the democratic values of free expression, civil discourse and nonviolent social engagement. And we tell another very important story — the story of an academic community that was and remains deeply committed to teaching the lessons of May 4, 1970, and applying them to make a positive difference in the world. We know you will find your experience here to be moving. We hope that you will also find it edifying and inspiring.

— Beverly Warren, President
Timeline of Events Leading Up to the Tragedy

Thursday, April 30, 1970
9 p.m.
President Richard Nixon announces the invasion of Cambodia. Students feel Nixon is breaking his promise to end the Vietnam War.

Friday, May 1, 1970
Noon
In protest, students symbolically burn a copy of the U.S. Constitution, saying Nixon has "murdered" it. They call for another rally on May 4.

Friday, May 1, 1970
3 p.m.
Members of Black United Students rally to discuss harsh treatment elsewhere and warn black students to avoid campus gatherings over the weekend.

Saturday, May 2, 1970
At about 10 p.m.
Ohio National Guard troops, requested by the mayor of Kent, enter campus with city firefighters who were called to put out a fire in the ROTC building.

Sunday, May 1, 1970
At about 11 a.m.
Ohio Governor James Rhodes labels demonstrators as worse than Nazis and says "to eradicate the problem."

Sunday, May 3, 1970
Afternoon
Soon after this photo is taken, Guardsmen disperse a rally at Lincoln and Main with tear gas and bayonets.

Sunday, May 3, 1970
At about 10 p.m.
Guardians prepare to disperse the noon rally on the Commons. They are ordered to load their M1 rifles.