

THE U.S. ARMY
CAMPAIGNS OF WORLD WAR I



THE U.S. ARMY
IN THE
WORLD WAR I ERA

THE U.S. ARMY CAMPAIGNS OF WORLD WAR I
COMMEMORATIVE SERIES

Series Editor: Brian F. Neumann

The U.S. Army in the World War I Era

The Mexican Expedition, 1916–1917

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Cover: *Soldiers in Bombed-Out Town*, by Samuel Johnson Woolf,
circa 1918. (Army Art Collection)



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Center of Military History
United States Army
Washington, D.C., 2017



EDITOR'S NOTE

The following pamphlet is drawn largely from *American Military History*, which the Center of Military History (CMH) first published in 1956 as a textbook for senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps courses. The historians at CMH have continually revised and updated the books over the years, but the primary intent has remained the same. This is equally true of this latest revision: namely to support military history education and to provide Army personnel with a concise, authoritative, yet also readable history of the institution in which they serve. As such, this volume is included as a part of the CMH Commemorative Pamphlet Series "The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War I" as a brief overview of U.S. Army in the years leading up to and including the First World War.



INTRODUCTION

A century ago, the great powers of Europe became engulfed in what was then called the Great War. It signaled a new age in armed conflict in which mass armies supported by industrial mass production brought an unprecedented level of killing power to the battlefield. By the time the United States entered the war in 1917, the combatants were waging war on a scale never before seen in history. The experience defined a generation and cast a long shadow across the twentieth century. In addition to a tremendous loss of life, the war shattered Europe, bringing revolution, the collapse of long-standing empires, and economic turmoil, as well as the birth of new nation-states and the rise of totalitarian movements.

The modern U.S. Army, capable of conducting industrialized warfare on a global scale, can trace its roots to the World War. Although the war's outbreak in August 1914 shocked most Americans, they preferred to keep the conflict at arm's length. The United States declared its neutrality and invested in coastal defenses and the Navy to guard its shores. The U.S. Army, meanwhile, remained small, with a regiment as its largest standing formation. Primarily a constabulary force, it focused on policing America's new territorial possessions in the Caribbean and Pacific as it continued to adapt to Secretary of War Elihu Root's reforms in the years following the War with Spain. It was not until June 1916 that Congress authorized an expansion of the Army, dual state-federal status for the National Guard, and the creation of a reserve officer training corps.

In early 1917, relations between the United States and Germany rapidly deteriorated. The kaiser's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare threatened American lives and commerce, and German meddling in Mexican affairs convinced most Americans that Berlin posed a danger to the nation. In April 1917, the president, out of diplomatic options, asked Congress to declare war on Germany. But the U.S. Army, numbering only 133,000 men, was far from ready. The president ordered nearly 400,000 National Guardsmen into federal service, and more than twenty-four million men eventually registered for the Selective Service, America's first

conscription since the Civil War. By the end of 1918, the Army had grown to four million men and had trained 200,000 new officers to lead them. As it expanded to address wartime needs, the Army developed a new combined-arms formation—the square division. Divisions fell under corps, and corps made up field armies. The Army also created supporting elements such as the Air Service, the Tank Corps, and the Chemical Warfare Service. The war signaled the potential of the United States as not only a global economic power, but also a military one.

In June 1917, the 1st Division deployed to France, arriving in time to parade through Paris on the Fourth of July. The first National Guard division, the 26th Division from New England, deployed in September. By war's end, the American Expeditionary Forces, as the nation's forces in Europe were called, had grown to two million soldiers and more than forty divisions. During 1918, these American “doughboys” learned to fight in battles of steadily increasing scale: Cantigny, the Marne, Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel, and Meuse-Argonne, adding thirteen campaign streamers to the Army flag. Overall, in roughly six months of combat, the American Expeditionary Forces suffered more than 255,000 casualties, including 52,997 battle deaths (as well as more than 50,000 nonbattle deaths, most due to the influenza pandemic). The war that the United States entered to “make the world safe for democracy” ended with an armistice on 11 November 1918, followed by a controversial peace. American soldiers served in the Occupation of the Rhineland until 1923, before withdrawing from Europe altogether.

The United States will never forget the American soldiers who fought and died in the World War. America's first unknown soldier was laid to rest on 11 November 1921 in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, where soldiers still stand guard. The United States created permanent American military cemeteries in France, Belgium, and Britain to bury the fallen. To this day, memorials to their sacrifice can be found across America, and the date of the armistice has become a national holiday honoring all those who serve in defense of the nation. The last surviving U.S. Army veteran of the war died in 2011. It is to all the doughboys, those who returned and those who did not, that the U.S. Army Center of Military History dedicates these commemorative pamphlets.

JON T. HOFFMAN
Chief Historian



THE U.S. ARMY IN THE WORLD WAR I ERA

World War I remains one of the defining events in the history of the U.S. Army. In all, more than four million served and half of them deployed overseas. The conflict capped a period of reform and professionalization that transformed the Army from a small, dispersed organization rooted in constabulary operations to a modern industrialized fighting force capable of global reach and impact. Aviation went from an experiment to a significant element of combat power. Tanks and chemical warfare appeared for the first time. Improvements in artillery, machine guns, and small arms increased the impact of firepower by orders of magnitude. The Army adopted the general staff system and robust command echelons for divisions, corps, and armies, and learned how to deploy and employ mass formations. Many modern units and installations trace their lineage to the vast expansion of the Army for the war. The U.S. participation in the war marked the arrival of the United States as a leading power on the world stage. In sum, a soldier from today could go a century back in time and feel at home in the Army of 1917, while a soldier from the latter 1800s transported forward two decades would have been thoroughly disoriented by the vast change. The commemoration of World War I allows today's Army to connect with an important element of its past and gain an appreciation for the impact of institutional transformation.

THE PREWAR ARMY, 1899–1917

For the United States the opening years of the twentieth century were a time of transition and change. At home it was a period of societal transformation, often designated as the Progressive Era, when political leaders such as Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William H. Taft worked to address the economic and social problems arising out of the rapid growth of large-scale industry in the late nineteenth century. In foreign affairs, the country had to begin adjusting its institutions and policies to the requirements

of its new status as a world power with colonial responsibilities. Those same issues inevitably affected the nation's military establishment. During nearly two decades between the War with Spain and American involvement in World War I, the Army would undergo important reforms in organization and direction.

Modernizing the Armed Forces

The intensification of international rivalries led most of the great powers of Europe to seek additional protection and advantage in diplomatic alliances and alignments. By the early years of the twentieth century the increasingly complex network of agreements had resulted in a new and precarious balance of power in world affairs. This balance was constantly in danger of being upset, particularly because of an unprecedented arms race among the European powers characterized by rapid enlargement of armies and navies and the development of far more deadly weapons. While the United States remained aloof from such "entangling alliances," it nevertheless continued to modernize and strengthen its own armed forces, giving primary attention to the Navy as its first line of defense.

The Army, aware of the serious deficiencies revealed in the War with Spain and of the rapid technological changes taking place in the methods of warfare, worked to modernize its weapons and equipment. Development of high-velocity, low-trajectory, clip-loading rifles capable of delivering a high rate of sustained fire had already made obsolete the Krag-Jørgensen rifle, which the Army had adopted in 1892. In 1903 the Regular Army began equipping its units with the improved bolt-action, magazine-type Springfield rifle. The campaigns of 1898 also had shown that the standard rod bayonet was too flimsy; starting in 1905, the Army replaced it with a sturdy knife bayonet. Combat at close quarters against the fierce charges of the Moros in the Philippines demonstrated the need for a hand weapon less cumbersome and having greater impact than the .38-caliber revolver. The Army found the answer in the recently developed .45-caliber Colt automatic pistol, adopted in 1911, a mainstay of the Army for most of the rest of the century.

Far more significant in revolutionizing the nature of twentieth-century warfare was the rapid-firing machine gun. American inventors, including Hiram Maxim, John Browning, and Isaac N. Lewis took a leading role in developing automatic machine guns in the years between the Civil War and World War I. Many of the

armies of the world adopted weapons based on their designs, but few realized the significant advantage of machine guns in modern tactics until fighting began in World War I. In the years between 1898 and 1916, Congress appropriated only an average of \$150,000 annually for procurement of machine guns, barely enough to provide four weapons for each regular regiment and a few for the National Guard. Finally, in 1916 Congress allocated \$12 million to equip the Army, but the War Department held up the expenditure until 1917 while a board tried to decide which weapon best suited the needs of the Army.

Development of American artillery and shells also lagged far behind that of the European armies. The Army did adopt a new basic field weapon in 1902, the 3-inch gun, with an advanced recoil mechanism. Domestic production was sufficient in 1903 to supply most American artillery for the small Regular Army, but it did not match the number or variety of artillery pieces being developed in Europe.

Of the many new inventions that came into widespread use in the early twentieth century, none was to have greater influence on military strategy, tactics, and organization than the internal combustion engine. It made possible the motor vehicle, which, like the railroad in the previous century, brought a revolution in military transportation, as well as the airplane and tank, both of which would figure importantly in World War I. In the new field of military aviation, the Army failed to keep pace with early-twentieth-century developments. Contributing to this delay were the reluctance of Congress to appropriate funds and resistance within the military bureaucracy to the diversion of already limited resources to a method of warfare as yet unproved. Between 1908 and 1913, it is estimated that the United States spent only \$430,000 on military and naval aviation, whereas in the same period France and Germany each expended \$22 million; Russia, \$12 million; and Belgium, \$2 million. Congress did not authorize the establishment of a full-fledged aviation section in the Signal Corps until 1914. The few military airplanes available for service in 1916 soon broke down, and the United States entered World War I far behind the other belligerents in aviation equipment, organization, and doctrine.

Reorganization of the Army Bureaucracy

After the War with Spain the Army also underwent important organizational and administrative changes aimed in part at

overcoming some of the more glaring defects revealed during that conflict. Although the nation had won the war with comparative ease, the victory was attributable more to the incompetence of the enemy than to any special qualities displayed by the Army. No one appreciated the need for reform more than Elihu Root, a New York corporation lawyer whom President William McKinley appointed secretary of war in 1899. The president had selected Root primarily because he was qualified to solve the legal problems that would arise in the Army's administration of recently acquired overseas possessions. But Root quickly realized that if the Army was to carry out its new responsibilities, it had to



Elihu Root
(Library of Congress)

undergo fundamental changes in organization, administration, and training. Root saw the Army's problems as similar to those faced by business executives. "The men who have combined various corporations . . . in what we call trusts," he told Congress, "have reduced the cost of production and have increased their efficiency by doing the very same thing we propose you shall do now, and it does seem a pity that the Government of the United States should be the only great industrial establishment that cannot profit by the lessons which the world of industry and of commerce has learned to such good effect." Root adopted recommendations made by his military advisers and views expressed by officers who had studied and written on these issues, outlining in a series of masterful reports his proposals for fundamental reform of the Army to achieve "efficiency." Concluding that the true object of any army must be "to provide for war," Root took steps to reshape the U.S. Army by better integrating the bureaus of the War Department, the scattered elements of the Regular Army, and the militia and volunteers.

Root perceived the chief weakness in the organization of the Army to be the longstanding division of authority, dating back to the early nineteenth century, between the commanding general of the Army and the secretary of war. The commanding general exercised discipline and control over the troops in the field; while the secretary, through the military bureau chiefs, had responsibility for administration and fiscal matters. Root proposed to eliminate this division of authority and to reduce the independence of the bureau chiefs by replacing the commanding general of the Army with a chief of staff who would be the responsible adviser and executive agent of the president through the secretary of war.

Another obvious deficiency revealed by the War with Spain was the lack of any long-range Army planning. Root proposed the creation of a General Staff, a group of selected officers who would be free to devote their full time to preparing military plans. Pending congressional action on his proposals, Root appointed an ad hoc board in 1901 to develop plans for an Army War College, but it also acted as an embryonic General Staff. In early 1903, in spite of some die-hard opposition, Congress adopted the secretary of war's recommendations for both a General Staff and a chief of staff but rejected his request that certain bureaus be consolidated.

Congressional legislation enacting Root's reform plan could not quickly change the long-held traditions, habits, and views of most Army officers or of some congressmen and the American public. Secretary Root realized that the effective operation of the new system would require an extended program of reeducation. The Army War College, established in November 1903, would meet that need. Its students, already experienced officers, would receive education in problems of the War Department and of high command in the field. As it turned out, they devoted much of their time to war planning, becoming in effect the part of the General Staff that performed this function. The Army also reorganized and refined the rest of its educational system in order to improve the professionalism of its officers. The General Staff and Service College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, henceforth trained officers in the employment of combined arms and prepared them for staff and command positions in large units. The Army expanded its service schools by adding the Signal School in 1905, the Field Artillery School in 1911, and the School of Musketry in 1913.

In the first years after its establishment the General Staff achieved relatively little in the way of genuine planning and

policymaking, devoting much of its time to routine administrative matters. Through experience, however, officers assigned to the staff gradually gained awareness of its real purpose and powers. In 1910, when Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood became chief of staff, he reorganized the General Staff, eliminating many of its time-consuming procedures and directing more of its energies to planning. With the backing of Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, Wood dealt a decisive blow to that element within the Army that opposed the General Staff. In a notable controversy, he and Stimson forced the retirement in 1912 of the leader of this opposition, Maj. Gen. Fred C. Ainsworth, the Adjutant General.

Reorganization: The Regular Army and the Militia

In the years after the War with Spain nearly a third of the Regular Army troops, on average, served overseas. To carry out its responsibilities abroad and to maintain an adequate defense at home, the Regular Army from 1902 to 1911 had an average of 75,000 officers and men, far below the 100,000 that Congress had authorized in 1902 to fill thirty infantry and fifteen cavalry regiments supported by a corps of artillery. To make up for this deficiency in size of the regular forces and at the same time to remedy some of the defects revealed in the mobilization for the War with Spain, the planners in the War Department recommended a reorganization of the reserve forces.

Secretary Root took the lead in presenting to Congress in 1901 a program for reform of the National Guard. In response, Congress passed the Militia Act of 1903 (commonly known as the Dick Act), which thoroughly revised the obsolete Militia Act of 1792. It recognized the National Guard as the nation's primary militia force and provided that over a five-year period the National Guard's organization and equipment would be patterned after that of the Regular Army. To help accomplish these changes in the National Guard, the Dick Act made federal funds available; prescribed drill at least twice a month, supplemented with short annual training periods; permitted detailing of regular officers to National Guard units; and directed the holding of joint maneuvers each year. However, the new measure failed to significantly modify the longstanding provisions that severely restricted federal power to call up National Guard units and control personnel, which limited its effectiveness. Subsequent legislation in 1908 and 1914 reduced these restrictions to some extent, giving the president the

right to prescribe the length of federal service and, with the advice and consent of the Senate, to appoint all officers of the National Guard while it was in federal service.

The military legislation passed in 1908 contained one additional provision that was to have far-reaching consequences. On 23 April 1908, the creation of the Medical Reserve Corps authorized the placement of several hundred medical personnel on a Federal Reserve status to be called to active duty if needed to augment the regular medical doctors. This was the small and humble beginning of the U.S. Army Reserve.

Although the largest permanent unit of the Regular Army in peacetime continued to be the regiment, experience in the War with Spain, observation of new developments abroad, and lessons learned in annual maneuvers all testified to the need for larger, more self-sufficient units composed of combined arms. Beginning in 1905, the *Field Service Regulations* laid down a blueprint for the organization of divisions in wartime, and in 1910 the General Staff drew up a plan for three permanent infantry divisions to be composed of designated Regular Army and National Guard regiments. Before that could be implemented, trouble along the Mexican border in the spring of 1911 required hasty organization of a provisional maneuver division consisting of three brigades of nearly 13,000 officers and men and its deployment to San Antonio, Texas.

The effort only proved how unready the Army was to mobilize quickly for any kind of national emergency. Assembly of the division required several months, drawing Regular Army troops and equipment from widely scattered points in the continental United States. Even so, when the maneuver division finally completed its concentration in August 1911, it was far from fully operational: none of its regiments were up to strength or adequately armed and equipped. Fortunately, the division was not put to any battle test, and within a short time its component units returned to their home stations. The Army had three divisions on paper, but its forces remained scattered in garrisons that averaged 700 troops each.

The Army on the Mexican Border

Even as the storm clouds of war were brewing in Europe early in the twentieth century, the Army found itself frequently involved in problems with the United States' southern neighbor, Mexico. Beginning in 1911, revolution and civil war in Mexico



On the Border, August 1916, by Donna Neary, depicts a column of soldiers of the 2d Connecticut Infantry on the march in Arizona. (Army Art Collection)

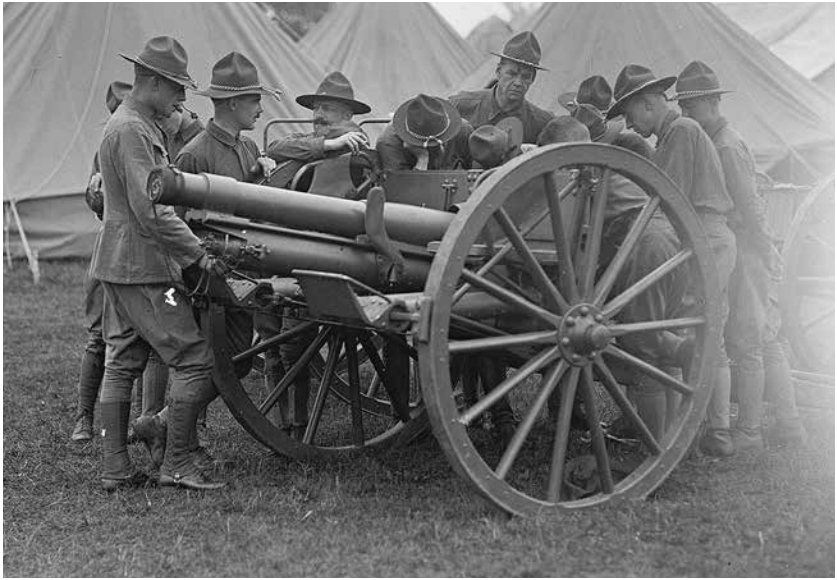
led to recurrent incidents along the border, posing a serious threat to Americans in the region. Full-scale civil war broke out in 1913. In February 1914, the arrest of American sailors in the port of Tampico further inflamed tensions. Woodrow Wilson, who had succeeded Taft as president, authorized U.S. marines and sailors to occupy the port of Vera Cruz in late April. Naval gunfire checked a Mexican counterattack and by the end of the month an American force of nearly 8,000 (about half marines and half Army troops) under the command of Maj. Gen. Frederick Funston held the city. Soon after, Francisco “Pancho” Villa launched yet another rebellion and proceeded to gain control over most of northern Mexico. Villa instigated a series of border incidents that culminated in a surprise attack by 500–1,000 of his men against Columbus, New Mexico, on 9 March 1916. His troops killed eighteen American soldiers and civilians and destroyed considerable property before units of the 13th Cavalry drove them off. The following day President Wilson ordered Brig. Gen. John J. Pershing into Mexico to assist the Mexican government in capturing Villa.

On 15 March the advance elements of this punitive expedition entered Mexico. For the next several months Pershing's troops chased Villa through unfriendly territory for hundreds of miles, never quite catching up with him but managing to disperse most of his followers. The Mexican government protested the continued presence of American troops in Mexico and insisted upon their withdrawal. Some clashes with Mexican government troops occurred, the most important taking place in June at Carrizal, where scores were killed or wounded. The heightened threat of wider conflict led President Wilson to call 75,000 national guardsmen into federal service to help police the border. Wilson sought a diplomatic solution, but before the two nations could reach any agreement, relations between the United States and Germany reached such a critical stage in early 1917 that Wilson had no alternative but to order withdrawal of the Mexican Expedition.

Pershing failed to capture Villa, but the activities of the American troops in Mexico and along the border were not entirely wasted. The intensive training of both the Regular Army and National Guard troops who served on the border and in Mexico would aid them in the coming months when they would begin preparing for service in Europe. Additionally, many defects in the military establishment, especially in the National Guard, came to light in time to be corrected before the Army plunged into the war already under way in Europe.

War in Europe and the National Defense Act of 1916

The United States could not ignore the huge conflict that began to rage in Europe in July 1914. President Wilson proclaimed the United States' neutrality and encouraged all Americans to avoid taking sides. Even so, it seemed at times as if the country was going to be dragged into the war, only to retreat from the precipice each time. In 1915 Germany began pursuing a strategy of unrestricted submarine warfare, vowing to sink any vessel that came into Allied waters. The subsequent sinking of the U.S. merchant ship *Gulflight* on 1 May 1915 and then the British liner *Lusitania* a week later with the loss of 128 American lives caused tremendous uproar among the American public. Germany pledged to suspend the practice after Wilson threatened to break off diplomatic relations, but it was becoming clear that the United States might have to become more fully involved in the war. Former Secretaries of War Root and Stimson, as well as former President Roosevelt, led a growing



Plattsburg Reserve Officers' Training Camp, 1916. Instruction for an M1902 3-inch field gun. (Library of Congress)

chorus calling for greater military preparedness. General Wood, whose term as the Army's chief of staff expired in 1914, lent his support to continue a practice he had introduced of conducting summer camps where college students paying their own way could receive military training. In 1915, his effort led to a four-week camp for business and professional men at Plattsburg Barracks, New York. Known as the Plattsburg Idea, its success justified opening other camps, assuring a relatively small but influential cadre possessing basic military skills and imbued with enthusiasm for preparedness.

Continuing to champion neutrality, President Wilson was becoming more aware of the necessity for military preparedness. Near the end of a nationwide speaking tour in February 1916, he not only called for creation of "the greatest navy in the world" but also urged widespread military training for civilians, lest someday the nation be faced with "putting raw levies of inexperienced men onto the modern field of battle." Some of the president's growing inclination toward the cause of preparedness could be traced to increasing concern on the part of members of his administration,

most notably the Secretary of War, Lindley M. Garrison. As an annex to his annual report in September 1915, Garrison had submitted a study prepared by the General Staff entitled "A Proper Military Policy for the United States." Garrison proposed more than doubling the Regular Army, increasing federal support for the National Guard, and creating a new 400,000-man trained reserve under solely federal control.

The proposal drew support in the Senate, but not enough to overcome opposition in the House of Representatives from supporters of the National Guard. Garrison soon grew tired of the political infighting, and believed that Wilson was not pushing the reforms strongly enough. He resigned as secretary of war and was replaced by Newton D. Baker, a progressive ally of Wilson and novice regarding military affairs. The military reforms might have bogged down had not Villa attacked Columbus. Facing pressing requirements on the Mexican border, the two halls of Congress at last compromised. Passed in May and signed into law the next month, the National Defense Act of 1916 was a major piece of comprehensive military legislative reform. It authorized an increase in the peacetime strength of the Regular Army over a period of five years to 175,000 men and a wartime strength of close to 300,000. Bolstered by federal funds and federally stipulated organizational structures and standards of training, the National Guard would increase more than fourfold to a strength of over 400,000 and would be obligated to respond to the call of the president. The act established both an Officers' and an Enlisted Reserve Corps, expanding beyond the Medical Reserve Corps into a full-spectrum federal reserve force. The law created a new Reserve Officers' Training Corps program at colleges and universities, which subsequently facilitated the mobilization and training of over 89,476 officers during World War I. On the negative side, the law also contained a severe restriction inserted by opponents of a strong General Staff, sharply limiting the number of officers who could be detailed to serve on the staff at the same time in or near Washington, D.C.

Going beyond the recognized province of military legislation, the National Defense Act of 1916 also granted power to the president to place orders for defense materials and to force industry to comply. The act further directed the secretary of war to conduct a survey of all arms and munitions industries. A few months later Congress demonstrated even greater interest in the industrial aspects of defense by creating the civilian

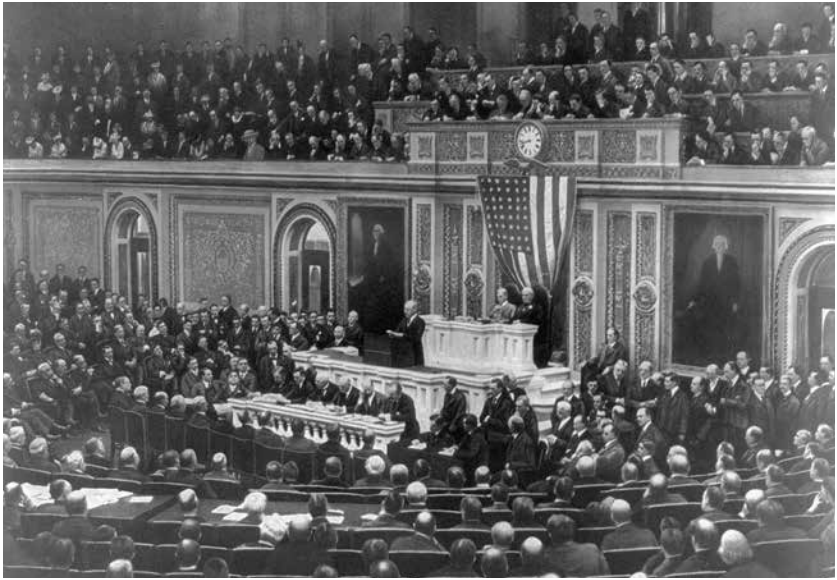
Council of National Defense made up of leaders of industry and labor, supported by an advisory commission composed of the secretaries of the principal government departments, and charged with the mission of studying economic mobilization. The administration furthered the preparedness program by creating the U.S. Shipping Board to regulate sea transport while developing a naval auxiliary fleet and a merchant marine. As broad as the reforms were, however, the United States would be drawn into the war before many of them could take full effect.

AT WAR

An End to Neutrality

As 1917 began, German leaders realized that their manpower losses over the previous year at Verdun and on the Somme required that they assume a defensive posture on the Western Front. Fearing that they would lose a protracted war if the strategic situation remained the same, the Germans turned to their submarines, of which they now had close to 200, to tip the scales in their favor. By resuming an unrestricted campaign against all shipping, whatever the nationality, in waters off the British Isles and France, the Germans believed they could defeat the British within six months. While they recognized that such a move ran the strong risk of bringing the United States into the war, they believed they could starve the British into submission before the Americans could raise, train, and deploy an army. They were nearly right.

On 31 January 1917, Germany informed the U.S. government and other neutrals that beginning the next day U-boats would sink all vessels without warning. While President Wilson still searched for some alternative to war, the British intercepted a German telegram that clearly showed German intentions toward the United States. This message, sent in January from the German Foreign Secretary, Arthur Zimmermann, to the German envoy to Mexico, proposed that in the event of war with the United States, Germany and Mexico would affect an alliance. In exchange for Mexico's taking up arms against the United States, Germany would provide generous financial assistance. Victory achieved, Mexico was to regain its lost territories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. On 23 February, just over a month after intercepting the telegram, the British turned over a copy to the American



*President Wilson asks for a declaration of war, 2 April 1917.
(Library of Congress)*

ambassador in London. When President Wilson received the news, he was angered but still unprepared to accept it as cause for war. He released the message to the press with the goal of prompting Congress to pass a bill authorizing the arming of American merchant ships. Congress and most of the nation were shocked by the revelation of the Zimmermann message, but pacifists and pro-Germans countered with a roar of disbelief that the message was authentic. From Berlin, Zimmermann himself silenced them when he admitted having sent the telegram.

In the next few weeks four more U.S. ships fell victim to German U-boats. Fifteen Americans died. At last convinced that no viable diplomatic options remained, the president went before Congress late on 2 April to ask for a declaration of war. Four days later, on 6 April 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. (The United States did not, however, declare war on any of Germany's allies at this time.)

Because the United States went to war largely over the issue of Germany's submarine warfare, the Wilson administration conceivably could have pursued a purely naval campaign against

the German submarines. But there was little support for such a limited role. British and French leaders, dealing with massive losses in their own armies, urged Wilson to reinforce the Western Front that stretched from Belgium to Switzerland. Despite the carnage, the Army's military leaders and planners saw the Western Front as the only place that the United States could play a decisive role in defeating Germany. The U.S. Army, however, was far from being prepared to take on that task. Peacetime reform packages since the end of the War with Spain had vastly improved the nation's land force, but the scale and ferocity of the war in Europe would shortly mandate the wholesale remaking of the U.S. Army yet again.

The United States had joined a war that was entering its fourth bitter year by the summer of 1917. After the opening battles of August 1914, the British and French armies and their German foes had settled into an almost continuous line of elaborate entrenchments that stretched for hundreds of miles across Belgium and France. To break this stalemate, each side sought to rupture the other's lines, using huge infantry armies supported by massive and sophisticated artillery fire, as well as poison gas. Nevertheless, against the barbed wire and interlocking machine guns of the trenches, compounded by the mud churned up by massive artillery barrages, these attempts floundered and failed to make meaningful

TRENCHES

European armies had first utilized trenches in the seventeenth century, but they appeared on an unprecedented scale during World War I after machine guns and rapid firing artillery defeated major French and German offensives in 1914. Trenches were most prominently used on the Western Front in France and Belgium, where continuous field fortifications stretched along a nearly 1,550-mile front. The combination of trenches and improved firepower made it almost impossible for attackers to force a breakthrough. In the intervals between large-scale attacks raiding parties constantly crisscrossed the shell-crated expanse known as "No Man's Land" to harass their opponents. From 1915 onward, the major combatants focused all of their national resources on breaking the strategic deadlock as increasing numbers of soldiers succumbed to disease, weather, and combat.

penetrations. Into this stalemate the U.S. Army would throw a force of over two million men by the end of the war. Half of these men would engage in battle, mostly in the last six months of the war.

The U.S. Army Arrives in Europe

Soon after the American declaration of war, the French and British governments sent delegations to the United States to coordinate assistance and offer advice on the form of American involvement. Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour, Maj. Gen. G. M. T. Bridges, and the rest of the British mission arrived first; a few days later the French mission followed, led by former French Premier René Viviani and Marshal Joseph J. C. Joffre. Characteristic of the lack of planning and unity between the two Allies, the missions devised no common plan for U.S. participation and did not even meet with each other before meeting with the Americans. Each delegation pressed its own national interests and viewpoints.

Neither of the Allies believed that the United States would be able to raise, train, and equip a large army quickly. Marshal Joffre, the former French Army commander and victor of the 1914 Battle of the Marne, suggested that the United States quickly send a division to France to symbolize American participation and bolster sagging French morale. He proffered French help with the training of the American units, but he was careful to point out that the United States should eventually form its own army. General Bridges, a distinguished divisional commander, proposed that the United States rapidly mobilize 500,000 Americans and ship them to England, where they would be trained, equipped, and incorporated into the British Army. This idea, known as amalgamation, would be the first of many schemes to integrate American battalions and regiments into the Allied armies.

Amalgamation had the advantage of expanding the existing field armies arrayed against Germany rather than establishing an entirely new one. If the United States decided to build a separate force, it would have to start at the ground level to create a modern army and then ship it overseas. That would require shipping and time, both of which were in short supply in 1917. Conversely, using American troops in foreign armies would be an affront to national pride and a slur on American military professionalism. Furthermore, amalgamation would decrease the visibility of the American contribution and lessen the role American leadership would be able to play in the war and in the peace that followed.

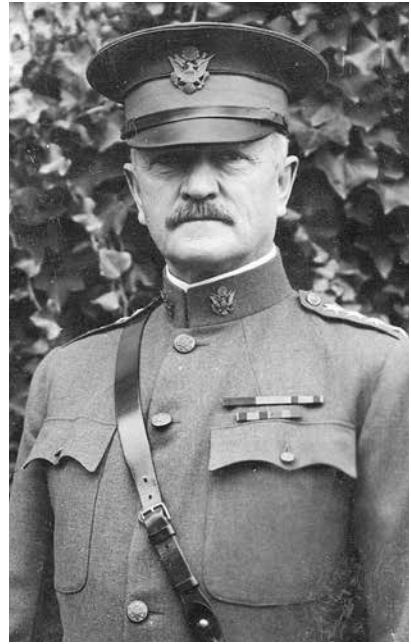
For these political and patriotic reasons, President Wilson rejected the proposal of having American troops serve under the British flag; however, he did agree to Joffre's recommendation to send a division to France immediately.

With Wilson's decision, Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Hugh L. Scott directed the General Staff to study a divisional structure of two infantry brigades, each consisting of two infantry regiments. In consultation with Joffre's staff, the Army planners, headed by Maj. John M. Palmer, developed a four-regiment division organization with 17,700 men, of which 11,000 were infantrymen. After adding more men, Maj. Gen. Tasker H. Bliss, Scott's deputy, approved this "square" organization—four regiments in two brigades—for the initial division deploying to France. Scott also asked Maj. Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of the Army's Southern Department at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to select four infantry regiments and a field artillery regiment for overseas service. Pershing chose the 6th Field Artillery and the 16th, 18th, 26th, and 28th Infantries. Although these regiments were among the most ready in the Regular Army, they all needed a large infusion of men to reach full strength. By the time the regiments left for France in June as part of the 1st Expeditionary Division, they were composed of about two-thirds raw recruits.

Secretary Baker soon chose General Pershing to command all American forces in France. Ultimately, there was little doubt of the selection, even though Pershing was junior to five other major generals, including former Chief of Staff General Wood. Wood and the other candidates were quickly ruled out from active field command because of health or age, while Pershing, at 56-years-old, was vigorous and robust. Pershing's record throughout his three decades of military service was exceptional. By 1917 he had proven himself as a tough and experienced leader. In particular, his command of the Mexican Expedition made a favorable impression on Secretary Baker. In addition to having gained recent command experience in the field, Pershing demonstrated that he would remain loyal to the administration's policies, although he might personally disagree with them. In early May Pershing received orders to report to Washington.

Shortly after Pershing arrived in Washington, he learned of his appointment as the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) commander. In turn he began selecting members of his headquarters staff, starting with the resourceful and energetic Maj. James G. Harbord, a fellow cavalryman of long acquaintance, as the AEF chief of staff. Together, they settled on thirty other

officers, including Maj. Fox Conner, who would end the war as the AEF's chief of operations (G-3), and Capt. Hugh Drum, who would later become the chief of staff of the U.S. First Army. As the staff prepared to depart for France, Pershing reviewed the organization of the 1st Expeditionary Division, discussed the munitions situation, and went over the embarkation plans. He met with both Secretary Baker and President Wilson (the only time the AEF commander met with the president until after the war). On 28 May 1917, Pershing and his headquarters staff of 191 set sail for Europe.



General Pershing
(National Archives)

Pershing and his staff began much of the preliminary planning on the nature, scope, and objectives for the future AEF while en route to Europe.

First in England and later in France, the group met their Allied counterparts, coordinated with the staffs, and assessed the conditions of wartime Europe. One staff committee inspected ports and railroads to begin arranging for the American lines of communications. Amid ceremonies and celebrations, the blueprints for the future AEF slowly took shape.

On 26 June the advance elements of the 1st Expeditionary Division joined Pershing and his staff in France. From St. Nazaire, the port of debarkation, the division traveled to the Gondrecourt area in Lorraine, about 120 miles southwest of Paris. There, the division would undergo badly needed training. Not only had the War Department brought its regiments up to strength with new recruits, but it had also siphoned off many of their long-service, well-trained regulars to provide the nucleus for the new divisions forming in the United States.

As the bulk of the division settled into its new home to learn the basics of soldiering, the French authorities persuaded

Pershing to allow a battalion of the 16th Infantry to march through Paris on the Fourth of July to encourage the French people. The parade culminated at Picpus Cemetery, burial place of Gilbert du Montier, the Marquis de Lafayette. At the tomb of the American Revolution hero, on behalf of Pershing, Col. Charles E. Stanton, a quartermaster officer fluent in French, gave a rousing speech, ending with the words "Lafayette, we are here!" Mistakenly attributed to Pershing, the words nevertheless captured the sentiments of many Americans: repaying an old debt.

Organizing the American Expeditionary Forces

Before Pershing departed for France, Secretary Baker told him: "I will give you only two orders, one to go to France and the other to come home. In the meantime, your authority in France will be supreme." Baker thus had given Pershing a free hand to make basic decisions and plan for the shape and form of the American ground contribution to the war in Europe. No other American field commander has been given as much power in the nation's history. Consequently, during the summer of 1917, Pershing and his small staff went about not only building the AEF's foundations, but making decisions that would establish policy objectives for the Army as a whole.

In late June 1917 the most crucial decision that Pershing needed to make concerned the location of the American zone of operations. With the advanced elements of the 1st Expeditionary Division due to arrive in France by the end of the month, it was essential that the staff lay out the training areas. Moreover, the selection of supply lines and depots all hinged on the establishment of the AEF sector. The French advised the Americans to place their troops somewhere in the eastern half of the Allied line. Accordingly, Pershing ordered his staff to make a reconnaissance of the Lorraine region, south and southwest of Nancy. For the American commander, the prime consideration in exploring this area was its potential for development and employment of a large, independent AEF in a decisive offensive.

With the massive armies of Germany, France, and Great Britain stalemated in the trenches of northern Europe since 1914, there was little chance of the Americans' exercising much strategic judgment in choosing their zone of operations. On the Allied northern flank, the British Expeditionary Forces guarded the English Channel ports that provided their logistical link with Great Britain as well as an

escape route from Europe in case the Western Front collapsed. To the British right, nationalism compelled the French armies to cover the approaches to Paris, the French capital. Moreover, the Allied armies were already straining the supply lines of northern France, especially the overburdened Paris railroad network. Any attempt to place a large American army west of Verdun would not only disrupt the British and French armies and limit any independent American activity, but it would also risk a complete breakdown of the supply system. These considerations left Lorraine as the only real choice for the American sector.

Although the proposed American sector would be far from the coastal ports, neither Pershing nor his staff lamented the circumstance. On the contrary, they believed that Lorraine was ideally suited to deploy a large, independent AEF. Logisticians supplying an American army in Lorraine would avoid the congested northern logistical facilities by using the railroads of central France that stretched back to the ports along the southwestern French coast. Furthermore, the Americans could move into the region with relative ease, and without disturbing any major Allied forces, because only a limited number of French troops occupied Lorraine. The AEF could settle down to the task of training its inexperienced soldiers and developing itself into a fighting force in a sector that had remained generally quiet since 1915.

Once Pershing had organized and trained the AEF, it would be ready to attempt a major offensive. His planners believed that the area around Lorraine offered excellent operational objectives. If the American forces could penetrate the German lines and carry the advance into German territory, they could deprive Germany of the important Longwy-Briey iron fields and coal deposits of the Saar. More important, an American offensive would threaten a strategic railroad that the Germans used to supply their armies to the west. Cutting the vital railroad would seriously hamper German operations and might even cause a withdrawal of some forces along the southern portion of the German line.

On 26 June, the day after Pershing accepted his officers' recommendation, he met with General Henri Philippe Pétain, the hero of Verdun and now overall commander of French forces. Pétain readily agreed to the Americans' taking the Lorraine portion of the Western Front. By the beginning of July elements of the newly redesignated 1st Division began to move into the training areas near Gondrecourt. Within three months three more American divisions would join the 1st Division in France.



Soldiers embark for France, 1917. (National Archives)

With the decision to situate the AEF in Lorraine, Pershing and his staff turned their attention to the next order of business: a tactical organization for the AEF. Pershing himself wanted the AEF to be employed in decisive offensive operations that would drive the Germans from their trenches and then defeat them in a war of movement. That the AEF would fight in primarily offensive operations would be the guiding principle for the American planners, headed by Lt. Col. Fox Conner and Maj. Hugh Drum. As they developed their organizational schemes, they relied heavily on the General Staff's provisional organization of May 1917 and consulted with both their French and British counterparts. Before finalizing their recommendations, they met with another American group, under Col. Chauncey Baker, which the War Department had commissioned to study the proper tactical organization for the U.S. Army. The result of the AEF staff's studies and planning was the General Organization Project, which guided the AEF's organization throughout the war.

The General Organization Project outlined a million-man field army comprising five corps of thirty divisions. While the infantry division remained the primary combined-arms unit and standard

building block of combat power, the AEF planners helped bring the modern concepts of operational corps and field armies to the U.S. Army. The organizational scheme was based on two principles: both the corps and division would have a square structure, and the division would contain a large number of riflemen adequately supported by artillery pieces and machine guns.

The AEF's proposed organization emphasized staying power for prolonged combat over rapid mobility. In a war of masses and protected flanks, the AEF planners believed that success would come with powerful and unrelenting blows delivered by a square organization—corps of four combat divisions and divisions of four regiments. This organization would permit the division to attack on a frontage of two brigades, each with a regiment in front and the other in reserve. Similarly, a corps could attack with two divisions on line and two divisions in reserve. In these formations, once the strength of the attack was drained from losses or sheer exhaustion, the lead units could be relieved easily and quickly by units advancing from behind. The fresh units would then continue the attack. Thus the depth of the formations would allow the AEF to sustain constant pressure on the enemy.

To maintain divisional effectiveness in the trenches of the Western Front, the General Organization Project enlarged the division to a strength of 25,484 (increasing to just over 28,000 including supporting logistics units), about twice the size of Allied divisions. Increasing both the number and the size of the rifle companies accounted for more than three-quarters of this expansion. The project added one company to each of the division's twelve rifle battalions and increased the size of a rifle company by 50 men for a total strength of 256. Three artillery battalions of 72 artillery pieces each and 14 machine gun companies with 240 heavy machine guns would support the division's 12,000-plus riflemen.

The AEF's organizational plan also created modern corps and army command echelons. Rarely used by the Army in the past and always small, the new headquarters had the manpower and capability to command, control, and coordinate their large and complex subordinate echelons. The field army had a headquarters of about 150 officers and men, while the corps had one of 350 personnel. Moreover, both echelons of command had a significant amount of combat power beyond their organic divisions. An AEF corps normally would have a brigade of heavy artillery and an engineer regiment as well as cavalry, antiaircraft, signal, and support units, totaling about 19,000 troops. The field army had a massive artillery organization of twenty-four

FIELD ARTILLERY

When the war began in August 1914, all European armies possessed mobile artillery capable of operating with infantry and cavalry. Industrialization and technological development enabled the Germans and the Allies to manufacture ever larger cannon that could deliver a staggering level of firepower. Lacking the resources to implement similar improvements, the American military remained a keen observer of events in Europe. The first three years of the war saw the adoption of new tactics, to include employing thousands of guns in lengthy bombardments, improving first-round accuracy, and directing artillery from airplanes. When the American Expeditionary Forces disembarked in France during summer 1917, its artillery component possessed the necessary theoretical knowledge but lacked the equipment and practical skills to immediately enter combat.

regiments as well as large numbers of engineer, military police, and supply units that numbered up to 120,000 men.

Consistent with the AEF planners' emphasis on sustained combat over a period of time, they also created a system to feed trained replacements into the units at the front. In addition to four attached combat divisions, each corps contained two base divisions that would supply replacements to the combat divisions, first from their own ranks and later from replacement battalions sent from the United States. Heavy losses in future campaigns would fully test this system.

In August the War Department incorporated the AEF's proposed divisional structure in its table of organization. It also approved the six-division corps and the five-corps army. Over the summer and early fall of 1917, Pershing and his small headquarters laid the groundwork for a large American force deployed to the Western Front. This foundation helped shape every aspect of the AEF's operation and organization, from training and tactics to troop strength and shipping.

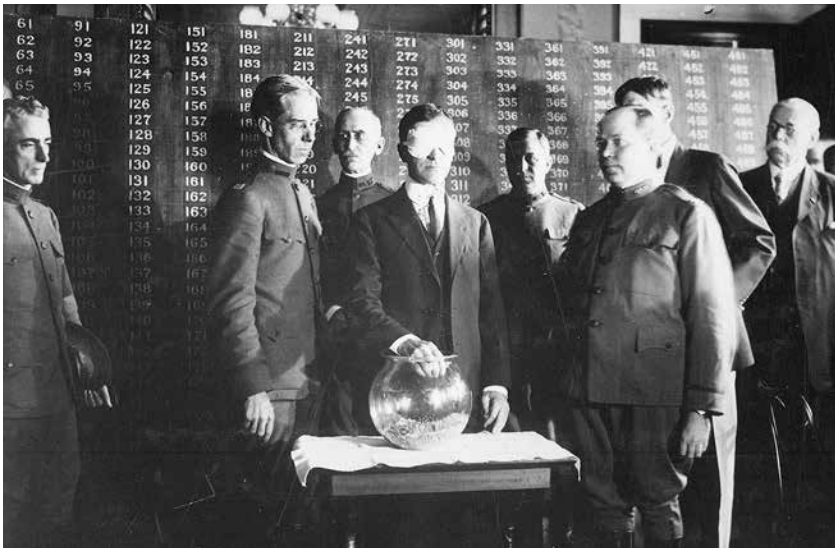
The War Effort in the United States

Pershing and his staff understood that they would be limited in what they could realistically do in 1918 because the U.S. Army

was in no position to make its weight felt in the near future. In April 1917 the Regular Army had an aggregate strength of 127,588 officers and men. The National Guard could count another 80,446 on federal service (out of a total strength of 181,620), and the Philippine Scouts contributed another 5,523 soldiers available for regular service. The total of 213,557 men (9,693 officers; 203,864 enlisted) was minute compared to the armies already fighting in Europe. The small Army barely had enough artillery and machine guns to support itself, and before the formation of the 1st Division in June not a single unit of that size existed. Although service in the Philippines and Mexico had given many of the officers and men of the small Regular Army important field skills and experience, it had done little to prepare them for large-scale planning, the maneuvering of divisions and corps, and the other logistical and administrative challenges of this new war. The task of managing the Army's necessary expansion into a large, modern force fell largely to Secretary Baker.

Baker seemed out of place heading America's war effort. A longtime friend of President Wilson, Baker had been appointed secretary of war in the spring of 1916, despite his pacifistic attitudes. Although as a progressive mayor of Cleveland he had changed that city's government into an efficient organization, as secretary of war he would often pursue a moderate, uncontroversial course rather than strike out on a new path. Yet in the bureaucratic chaos that ensued after the United States' entry into the war, Baker proved an unflappable leader who was flexible enough to force change if he had the correct tools.

The War Department started off by addressing the means to raise an army for service in the war. It drafted legislation for what would be the Selective Service Act, enacted on 18 May 1917, which enabled the United States to obtain the necessary manpower for the conflict while avoiding the difficulties and inequities with conscription that the Union had experienced during the Civil War. The result was a model system. Based on the principle of universal obligation, it eliminated substitutes, most exemptions and bounties, and assured that conscripts would serve for the duration of the emergency. Initially, all males between the ages of twenty-one and thirty had to register; later the range expanded to include males from eighteen to forty-five. At the national level, the Office of the Provost Marshal General under Maj. Gen. Enoch Crowder established policy and issued general directives. The administration of the draft, however, was left to boards composed

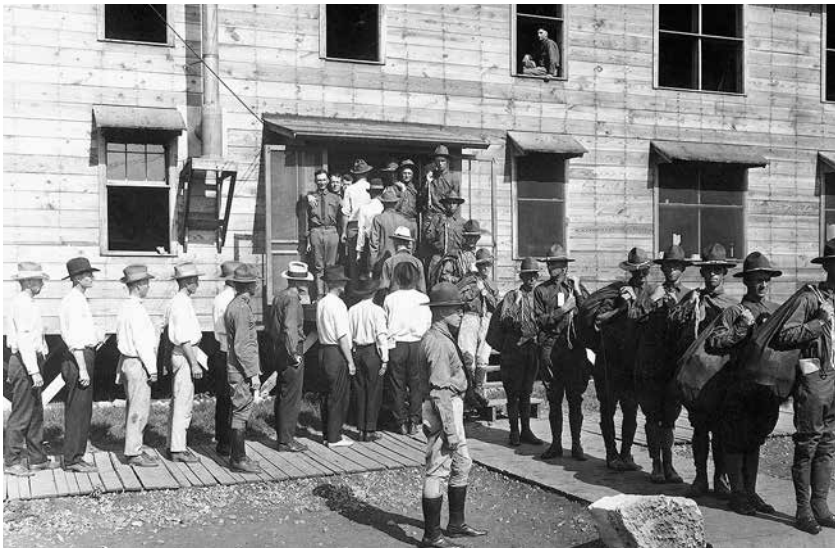


Secretary Baker chooses the first number for the second draft.
 (National Archives)

of local citizens, who could grant selective exemptions based on essential occupations and family obligations.

The Selective Service Act was hugely successful. The Army's prewar strength of a little over 200,000 men grew to almost 4.2 million by November 1918. About two-thirds of this number was raised through conscription. The Selective Service process proved so successful at satisfying the Army's needs while ensuring that essential civilian occupations remained filled that voluntary enlistments ended in August 1918. For the rest of the war, conscription remained the sole means of filling the Army's ranks.

The act also established the broad framework for the Army's structure. It outlined three components of the Army: the Regular Army, the National Guard, and the National Army. As time passed these distinctions lost much of their meaning as new soldiers filled out all three elements. By mid-1918 the War Department changed the designation of all land forces to one "United States Army." The most significant remaining distinction was in the numerical designations; Regular Army divisions were numbered from 1 to 25, those originating from the National Guard were 26 through 75, and the National Army formations went from 76 upward.



*Drafted men reporting for service, Camp Travis,
San Antonio, Texas, 1917 (National Archives)*

Just how big an army the United States needed depended in large measure on General Pershing's plans and recommendations to meet the operational situation in France. In the General Organization Project of July 1917, Pershing and his staff called for a field army of about one million men to be sent to France before the end of 1918. The War Department in turn translated Pershing's proposal into a plan to send thirty divisions with supporting services—almost 1.4 million men—to Europe by 1919. As the Germans launched their spring offensives in 1918 and the AEF began more active operations, Pershing increased his estimates. In June 1918 he would ask for three million men with sixty-six divisions in France by May 1919. He raised this estimate to eighty divisions by April 1919, followed shortly (under pressure from the Allies) by a request for one hundred divisions by July of the same year. Although the War Department questioned whether one hundred divisions could be sent to France by mid-1919 and even whether that many would be needed, it produced plans to raise ninety-eight divisions, with eighty of them to be in France by the summer of 1919. These plans increased the original goal for divisions in France by the end of 1918 from thirty to fifty-two.

In the end the Army actually would form sixty-two divisions, of which forty-three went overseas.

To train these divisions the Army would eventually establish thirty-two camps throughout the United States. How much training incoming soldiers needed before going overseas had long been a matter of debate, but in 1917 the War Department settled on four months. It established a sixteen-week program that emphasized training soldiers by military specialty such as riflemen, artillery gunners, supply or personnel clerks, or medical specialists. Division commanders at each camp had latitude to train their men progressively from individual to battalion level with a primary focus on individual and small-unit skills. Initially, much to the dismay of Pershing and his staff in France, this training only emphasized trench, or positional, warfare and excluded rifle marksmanship and other elements of a more open and mobile warfare. Moreover, there was no time for larger units to come together to train as combined-arms teams. Until the end of the war, the training managers at the War Department had various degrees of success as the department worked to establish a consistent training regimen and to move away from the emphasis on trench warfare. The Army, however, was never able to implement an effective method for combined-arms training at the regiment and division levels before the units deployed. It would remain for the AEF in France to either complete the training of the incoming divisions or, more commonly, to send them into combat not fully prepared.

The training of replacements also remained problematic throughout the war. As early as the late summer of 1917, Pershing knew that sooner or later he would have to deal with the problem of replacing combat losses in his divisions. He complained to the War Department that he did not have the resources—especially time—to train replacements and instead recommended that a stateside division be assigned the mission of providing trained replacements to each of his corps in France. The War Department did not act on his proposal and did little on its own to resolve the problem until early 1918. A major obstacle to a replacement training system was the Wilson administration's concern that the establishment of replacement training centers would imply that the government anticipated wholesale American losses. Nevertheless, several centers were established in April 1918 to train infantry, artillery, and machine gun replacements. Though the Army continued to make progress on creating a viable program,

the replacements overwhelmed the nascent system; again, it was left up to the deployed forces to deal with the problem.

The mobilization and training of manpower had been a major concern of a century of American military thought, but in World War I the demands of arming, equipping, and supplying a three-million-man Army meant that American industry also had to be mobilized. The National Defense Act of 1916 had to a degree anticipated this need with the creation of the Council of National Defense to provide a central point for the coordination of military industrial needs. Even before America's entry into the war, the council had created the Munitions Standards Board to establish standards for the production of ordnance. Soon, however, it became apparent that the enormous materiel requirements of industrialized warfare would need careful management; thus the Munitions Standards Board grew in stages to become the War Industries Board. With both civilian and military representatives, it had broad powers to coordinate all purchasing by the Army and Navy, to establish production priorities, to create new plants and convert existing ones to priority uses, and to coordinate the activities of various civilian war agencies. Under the vigorous leadership of industrialist Bernard Baruch, the War Industries Board would become the chief agency of economic and industrial mobilization for the war. In general, the Army's liaison with civilian mobilization agencies was coordinated through Baruch's board; however, it maintained separate liaison with the administration's Shipping and Railway War Boards that governed transportation requirements.

Even with these efforts, the demand for arms was so immense and immediate and the time required for contracts to be let and industry to retool so lengthy that the Army had to depend heavily on Allied, especially French, weapons. For the AEF's Air Service, the United States had 2,698 planes in service, of which 667, less than one-fourth, were of American manufacture. Of the almost 3,500 artillery pieces the AEF had in France, only 477 were American made and only 130 of those were used in combat. Despite possessing the world's largest automotive industry, the United States had to rely on French tanks for the AEF's Tank Corps; in some instances British and French tank battalions supported U.S. troops.

American industry had better success with infantry weapons. Almost 900,000 rifles were on hand for the Army's use when the war broke out. Two Army arsenals were producing the excellent Model 1903 Springfield rifle and could step up production. Three private companies were producing the Lee-Enfield rifle for the



*Production line for 3-inch shells, Bethlehem Steel Company,
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (National Archives)*

British; when they completed their contract, they began turning out Enfields modified for American ammunition. Because the Army had not purchased a large number of machine guns in the prewar period, the AEF was armed almost exclusively with French machine guns and automatic rifles until July 1918. American industry, however, was able to recover relatively quickly and by the end of the war had produced excellent results. By the late summer of 1918 new American units were armed with superb Browning machine guns and the famous Browning Automatic Rifle (also known as a BAR); these weapons were among the best of their kind in the world.

Industry also did well in terms of the soldier's personal needs. The Army worked closely with the War Food Administration to avoid the food scandals of earlier wars. Inductions had to be slowed briefly until sufficient uniforms could be accumulated, and shortages in some items persisted; but this resulted less from industry's failures than from a cumbersome quartermaster contracting system, which was eventually corrected.

The one area where the War Department was supremely lacking was in its own ability to manage the war. In the spring of 1917 the Army's General Staff was a small war-planning agency rather than a coordinating staff for the War Department and its bureaus. The National Defense Act of 1916 had limited the number of General Staff officers that could be stationed in Washington to fewer than twenty, less than a tenth of England's staff in August 1914. Once the United States joined the conflict many talented officers left Washington for overseas or commands, even as the staff needed to undergo a massive expansion. Without a strong coordination agency to provide oversight, the staff bureaus ran amok. By July more than 150 War Department purchasing committees competed against each other, often cornering the market for scarce items and making them unavailable for the Army at large. While the General Staff at least established troop movement and training schedules, no one set up industrial and transportation priorities. To a large degree the problem was that Baker did not have a strong chief of staff to control the General Staff and manage the bureaus. Both General Scott and his successor, General Bliss, were near retirement and distracted by special assignments. Baker did little to alleviate these problems until late 1917.

By then the situation had become a crisis. Responding to pressure from Congress and recommendations from the General Staff, Baker took action to centralize and streamline the supply activities. First, in November, he appointed industrialist Benedict Crowell, a firm believer in centralized control, as the assistant secretary of war; later Crowell would also assume duties as director of munitions. On the military side, Baker called back from retirement Maj. Gen. George W. Goethals, who had coordinated the construction of the Panama Canal. First appointed acting quartermaster general in December, Goethals quickly assumed the mantle of the Army's chief supply officer. Eliminating red tape and consolidating supply functions, especially the purchasing agencies, he also brought in talented administrators from both the military and the civilian sector to run the supply system.

In the meantime, the secretary of war was beginning to reorganize the General Staff. Congress had increased the size of the staff, but it wasn't until Maj. Gen. Peyton C. March became the chief of staff in March of 1918 that the General Staff gained a firm, guiding hand. Over his thirty years of service, the 53-year-old March had gained an experience well balanced between line and staff. He had been cited for gallantry as a junior officer in the

War with Spain and in the Philippine Insurrection. He also served tours of duty with the Office of the Adjutant General and most recently had been Pershing's artillery chief in France. Forceful and brilliant, March was unafraid of making decisions.

March's overarching goal was to get as many men as possible to the AEF in Europe to win the war. To achieve this, he set about making the General Staff and the War Department more effective and efficient, quickly clearing bureaucratic logjams, streamlining operations, and ousting ineffective officers. In May 1918 he was aided immeasurably by the Overman Act, which granted the president authority to reorganize executive agencies during the war. Moreover, he received the additional authority of the rank of four-star general. March quickly decreed that the powerful bureau chiefs were subordinate to the General Staff and were to report to the secretary of war only through the chief of staff.

In August 1918 March drastically reorganized the General Staff, creating four main divisions: Operations; Military Intelligence; Purchase, Storage, and Traffic; and War Plans. The divisions' titles fairly well explained their functions. Notably, with the creation of the Purchase, Storage, and Traffic Division, for the first time the Army had centralized control over logistics. Under this reorganization, the total military and civilian strength of the General Staff increased to just over 1,000 and took on a much more active role.

By the end of the summer of 1918, Generals March and Goethals and their talented military and civilian subordinates had engineered a managerial revolution in the War Department. Inefficiency, pigeonholes, and snarled actions were replaced by centralized control and decentralized operations.

The AEF Settles In

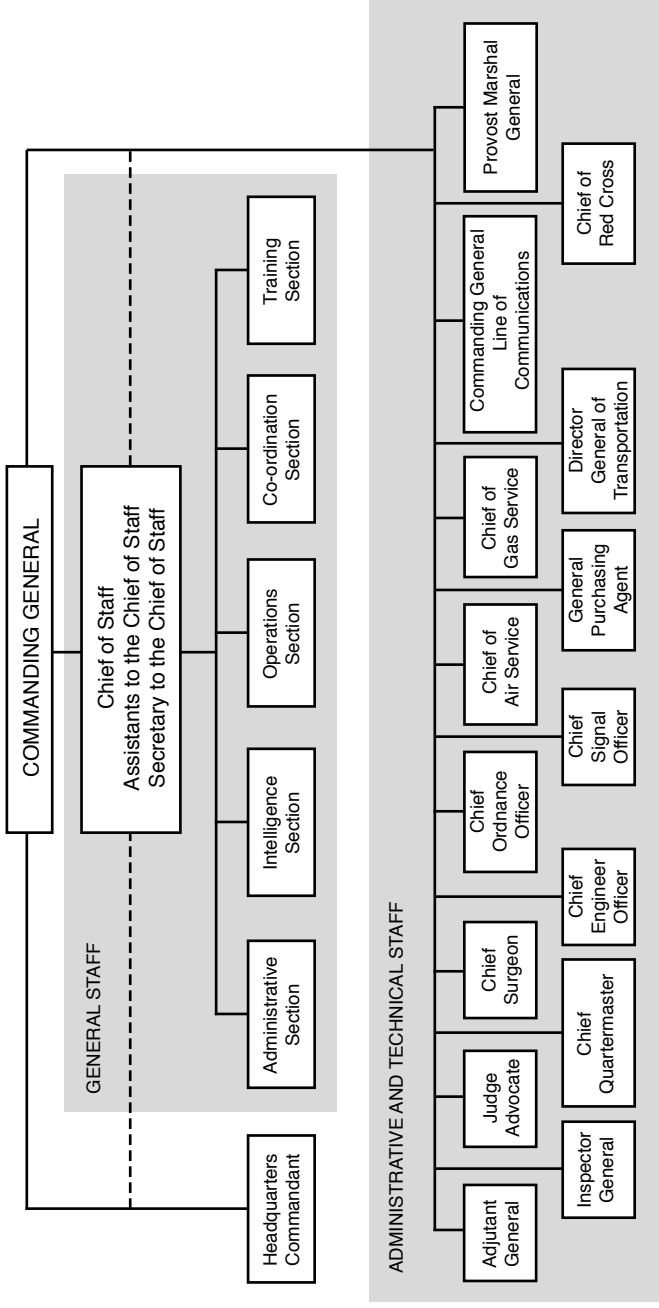
As the War Department struggled with the complexities of manpower and economic mobilization, Pershing went about organizing and training his forces. To provide logistical support, he created a commander of the Line of Communications, subsequently renamed Services of Supply, responsible directly to him. After a series of short-term commanders, Maj. Gen. Francis J. Kernan, a capable administrator, headed the Services of Supply; Kernan would be followed in mid 1918 by Maj. Gen. James G. Harbord, Pershing's first chief of staff. Headquartered in Tours along the

Loire River, the supply organization was divided into base sections at each of the French ports, an intermediate section for storage and classification of supplies, and an advance section for distribution to the zone of operations. Once the AEF entered combat, the advance section's depots loaded supplies onto trains that moved forward to division railheads, and then the divisions pushed the supplies to the front in wagons and trucks. Like Goethals' supply organization in the United States, Kernan and Harbord relied heavily on businessmen temporarily in uniform, such as Charles G. Dawes, a Chicago banker who acted as the AEF's General Purchasing Agent in Europe, and William W. Atterbury, a vice president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, who supervised the AEF's transportation system.

Pershing also established his own General Staff in France. Reflecting the French system, Pershing's AEF staff ultimately included a chief of staff, a deputy chief, and five assistant chiefs supervising the sections: G-1 (Personnel), G-2 (Intelligence), G-3 (Operations), G-4 (Co-ordination), and G-5 (Training) (*Chart 1*). Under the commander's watchful eye, the staff developed into a confident, competent, and loyal team that understood his goals and standards. As the war progressed, the staff officers could and did act and speak for Pershing without waiting for his personal approval. This practice would sometimes raise the ire of subordinate commanders, who were more accustomed to direct contact with their commanding officer than receiving directives and guidance through staff officers. Nevertheless, Pershing's staff officers freed him of the details of intricate planning and administration and allowed him to coordinate on strategic matters with the allies, confer with his subordinate commanders, and inspect and inspire his troops.

One advantage that many of Pershing's staff officers shared was their training at Fort Leavenworth's service schools. A component of the Root reforms at the turn of the century, these schools provided comprehensive training in the tactics, administration, and employment of large-scale units. Eight of the twelve officers to serve as AEF principal staff officers had Leavenworth training, as did a great majority of the division, corps, and army chiefs of staff. Because of their common educational experience, this group was called, somewhat disparagingly, the "Leavenworth Clique." There is little question, however, that this common background and doctrinal training served the officers well as they coordinated the activities of the massive American force.

CHART 1—ORGANIZATION OF HEADQUARTERS, AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES, 5 JULY 1917



Source: *United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919*, vol. 16, *General Orders, GHQ, AEF* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1992), p. 14.

Pershing placed great value in the benefits of a Leavenworth education. Its graduates knew how to move large concentrations of men and equipment to battle, how to write clear and precise operation orders, and how to coordinate the staff and line to effect these operations. An unexpected windfall was the officers' great familiarity with the Metz area by virtue of Leavenworth's reliance on German maps—rather than inferior American maps—for exercises and terrain analysis. The officers' common Leavenworth experience, moreover, permitted the AEF staff to speak the same language and to approach strategic and tactical situations in a similar manner. "Except for an ominous rumble to the north of us," one graduate noted in the fall of 1918, "I might have thought that we were back at Leavenworth . . . the technique and the talk were the same."

In September 1917 Pershing moved his General Headquarters (GHQ) to Chaumont, about 150 miles southeast of Paris. Perhaps symbolic of the growing autonomy—at least in thought—of the American leaders in France, Chaumont was also centrally located to the prospective American front lines and to the American training areas. From Chaumont, Pershing and his staff would oversee the training of the AEF divisions.

With the massive infusion of new recruits into the Army, the AEF commander knew that all American units were badly in need of training. The extensive regimen for the incoming divisions had three phases. The first emphasized basic soldier skills and unit training at platoon, company, and battalion levels. In the second phase, battalions joined French regiments in a quiet sector to gain frontline experience. Finally, the division's infantry and artillery would come together for field training to begin to work as a combined team. Throughout the phases, regiment, brigade, and division staffs would conduct tactical command post exercises. Then the divisions would be ready for actual, independent combat operations.

By the fall of 1917 Pershing had four divisions to train. The 1st Division had been in France since late June 1917. It was joined by the 2d Division, with a brigade of soldiers and a brigade of marines; the 26th Division comprised of National Guard units from New England; and the 42d Division, called the "Rainbow Division" because it was a composite of guardsmen from many states. In all four, many of the men were new recruits. Only in mid-January 1918, six months after the 1st Division's arrival in France, did Pershing consider it ready to move as a unit into a quiet sector of the trenches. The other three divisions would follow later in 1918.

GAS IN WORLD WAR I

The Western Front had seen extensive chemical operations since April 1915, utilizing agents such as phosgene, chlorine, and mustard gas. Although the German Army was the first to use chemical agents, all nations were soon incorporating chemical weapons into their arsenals. The United States, however, entered the war essentially unprepared for chemical warfare. The U.S. Army and Marine Corps had to rely heavily on French and British expertise for chemical training, doctrine, and materiel. Building on this imported knowledge base, the Army eventually established a separate Chemical Warfare Service to coordinate the offensive, defensive, and supply problems involved in using chemical weapons. Gas inflicted over a quarter of all AEF casualties.

For training in trench warfare, Pershing gratefully accepted the help of experienced Allied, especially French, instructors. For its training, the 1st Division was paired with the crack French 47th Chasseur Alpin Division. The AEF also followed the Allied system of setting up special training centers and schools to teach subjects such as gas warfare, demolitions, and the use of hand grenades and mortars. Pershing, however, believed that the French and British had become too imbued with trench warfare. Because he strongly held that victory could come only after driving the Germans from their trenches and defeating them in open warfare, he insisted on additional training in offensive tactics, including a focus on rifle marksmanship and use of the bayonet.

Ideally, the divisions would go through their training cycle in three or four months. Unfortunately, soldiers and units often arrived from the United States with less-than-expected training in basic skills. Also, officers and men were too often sent away from their units to attend schools or perform labor details. Moreover, due to the German Spring Offensives of 1918, divisions were pressed into line service before they completed the full training regime.

Wanting to ensure that the Americans would not stumble in taking their first step, Pershing waited until late October 1917 to allow the 1st Division to have its first trial experience in the line. One battalion at a time from each regiment spent ten days with a French division. In early November one of these deployments



Soldier and horse in gas masks
(National Archives)

resulted in the first U.S. Army casualties of the war when the Germans staged a trench raid against the same battalion that had paraded in Paris. The Germans captured eleven Americans and killed three: Cpl. James B. Gresham, Pvt. Thomas F. Enright, and Pvt. Merle D. Hay.

German Offensives and the AEF's First Battles

By late 1917, as the AEF methodically pursued its training program, the Allied situation on the Western Front had reached low ebb. The French armies were still recovering from the disastrous Nivelle Offensive of April 1917 and subsequent mutinies in which the French soldiers told their officers that they would defend France but would no longer attack. The British armies, under Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, suffered shocking losses in the Passchendaele Campaign during the latter half of 1917. As a consequence of this offensive, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George withheld replacements to assure that Haig would have to remain on the defensive. The Allies appeared to have no alternative for 1918 but to grimly hold on until enough American troops arrived to assure the numerical superiority essential to victory.

While the Allies were smarting from their losses, Germany triumphed on its other fronts. The Bolshevik Revolution and German battlefield victories led Russia to drop out of the war in October. Using forces freed from the Eastern Front, the Germans spearheaded an Austro-German offensive along the Isonzo River in late October that drove back the Italians more than sixty miles in less than a month. The Germans now could concentrate their forces on the Western Front for offensive operations.

Against this strategic backdrop, the Allies pressed Pershing to abandon his plans to wait for 1919 to make a large-scale commitment of American forces. With Pershing unwilling to discard the objective of an independent American army, the questions over amalgamation surfaced anew at the end of 1917. The Allies had experienced commanders and units and the necessary artillery, aviation, and tank support; but they lacked men. Meanwhile, the American situation was the reverse. Amalgamation would permit American manpower to be quickly brought to bear to hasten the victory. Toward this end, the British opened the next round of the debate by going directly to the American leadership in Washington.

In late 1917 Prime Minister Lloyd George approached "Colonel" Edward House, President Wilson's close adviser, on the possibility

of American infantry companies training and fighting as part of British units. President Wilson and Secretary Baker deferred the decision to Pershing, who stubbornly refused. The issue arose again early in 1918, when the British offered to transport 150 battalions of riflemen and machine gunners, which would be used to temporarily fill out British divisions. Pershing again refused but made a counterproposal for the British to ship six complete American divisions instead of only infantry battalions. These units would train with the British, although their artillery would train with the French. Once the training was over, the battalions and regiments would be formed into divisions under their own American officers. The British reluctantly consented to this six-division agreement. For the French, Pershing made another arrangement to have the four American divisions then in France serve under the French in Lorraine. In addition, Pershing agreed to transfer the four African American infantry regiments of the 93d Division to the French Army, where they were eventually incorporated into French divisions.

In opposing the amalgamation of the American troops into Allied commands, Pershing was not callous to the Allied situation. While he appreciated the threat of a German attack, both he and his staff believed that the British and French could withstand the potential German offensive and that neither was at the brink of collapse. Pershing steadfastly held to his objective of an independent American Army, following his own beliefs in the wisdom of that option and his instruction from Washington to create “a separate and distinct force.” Amalgamation would squander American forces in the present, instead of looking toward the future, when the United States could provide the bulk of the Allied forces under the U.S. flag. Pershing explained to Secretary Baker that men were not pawns to be shoved from one army to another, that Allied training methods differed, and, most important, that once the American troops were put into Allied units they would be hard to retrieve.

As the Allies debated, the German high command planned a series of offensives to end the war. While Germany was now temporarily able to achieve numerical superiority on the Western Front, strategically its manpower reservoir was shrinking, its economy was stretched to the limit, and its population faced starvation. To achieve victory, the German Army needed to act before the strategic difficulties overwhelmed its short-term battlefield advantages. With new tactics for massing artillery and

INFILTRATION TACTICS

Infiltration tactics encompass a range of improvements in small-unit and combined-arms methods developed by armies during the Great War to overcome the static nature of trench warfare. They commonly utilized the coordination of artillery barrages targeting enemy communication and transportation systems behind the lines with highly trained light infantry assaults against weak parts of the line, isolating strong points that could be reduced with follow-on attacks. The resulting confusion would force the entire line to collapse. The most famous example of these methods was the German *Sturmtruppen* (“storm troops”) used in the Spring Offensive in 1918. Although they made impressive gains, infiltration units continued to struggle to maintain momentum during attacks as they outran support elements.

infiltrating infantry into the Allied lines, the German military leaders believed they could strike decisive blows before American manpower and resources could weigh in for the Allies.

On 21 March 1918, the first German offensive fell on the British along the Somme. After a massive artillery barrage, sixty-two German divisions smashed the British line and achieved a penetration along a fifty-mile front. They were heading toward Amiens, a communications hub on the Somme that if seized would effectively split the French and British armies. British forces rallied to prevent the capture of Amiens, and by the first week of April the German offensive had bogged down. The Germans nevertheless had achieved a brilliant tactical victory: an advance of forty miles in eight days, 70,000 prisoners and 200,000 other Allied casualties. Strategically, the result was empty. The Germans had failed to destroy the British armies or separate them from the French.

Operationally, at this point, the Americans could do little materially to assist the British. On 25 March Pershing offered General Pétain any AEF division that could be of service and postponed the idea of fielding American divisions under the American I Army Corps. Appreciating the offer, Pétain preferred for the Americans to replace French divisions in quiet sectors, freeing the more experienced French divisions for action against the Germans. Marshal Haig specifically asked Pershing for any



Firing at German aircraft (National Archives)

available heavy artillery or engineer units. Pershing had no heavy artillery available but sent three engineer regiments north.

The German offensives also jarred the Allied leadership into building a stronger joint command structure. After the Italian defeat at Caporetto in November 1917, the British and French leaders agreed to the creation of the Supreme War Council to coordinate actions and strategy on the Western Front. In addition to political leaders, the council provided for a committee of military advisers. General Bliss, the former chief of staff, more than ably served as the American representative. Although the council provided a useful forum for the Allies, committees are rarely able to provide firm direction. Consequently, when the German attack fell on the Somme, the Allies saw the need to coordinate the British and French responses. They chose General Ferdinand Foch, both respected and capable, to coordinate the forces around the Amiens salient. Later, he was charged with coordination of all Allied land forces. Although Foch never had the full authority to command the Allied forces, through persuasion and force of character, he was able to successfully influence the other strong-willed Allied commanders, including General Pershing.

In April the Germans launched another attack on the British lines, aimed along the Lys River, to the north of the Amiens salient. Once again the Germans achieved tactical victory but operationally only created another salient in the Western Front.

With the German advances in March and April, the Allied leadership again pressed Pershing for the service of American troops with their armies. At the end of March the Supreme War Council had drafted Joint Note No. 18, which recommended that priority of shipping go to American infantry. To the British, this looked to nullify the six-division agreement of January; they wanted to ship just riflemen and machine gunners for the next four months (April–July). Pershing refused. Over the next few weeks, in a series of confused and often contradicting negotiations in London, Washington, and Paris, the Allies and the Americans bickered over American manpower. At the end of April Pershing and Lord Alfred Milner, the new British war minister, consented to a modified six-division agreement: British shipping would transport six American divisions to train with Haig’s armies, but Pershing agreed to have all the infantry and machine gunners shipped first.

At the May summit of Allied and American leaders (only President Wilson was absent) at Abbeville, France, the Allies, led by French Premier George Clemenceau, again brought up the issue of amalgamation. Over the two-day conference, virtually all the Allied leaders pressed Pershing to bring over American infantry at the expense of the rest of the divisional elements throughout the summer of 1918. At one point, General Foch asked Pershing in exasperation, “You are willing to risk our being driven back to the Loire?” Pershing replied: “Yes, I am willing to take the risk. Moreover, the time may come when the American Army will have to stand the brunt of this war, and it is not wise to fritter away our resources in this manner.” Pershing continued to believe that the Allies were overestimating the effect of the German offensives and exploiting the situation to recruit American soldiers for their armies.

Finally, after two days of acrimonious debate, Pershing proposed to continue the agreement with Milner for both May and June. Discussion of troop shipments in July would be delayed for the time being. The Allies unhappily accepted this arrangement. The Abbeville Agreement held that 130,000 Americans were to be transported in British shipping in May and 150,000 in June. American shipping would be used to transport artillery, engineers, and other support and service troops to build a separate American army.

In the meantime AEF divisions fought their first two engagements, albeit in only local operations. In late April Maj. Gen. Clarence Edwards’ 26th (Yankee) Division held a quiet sector near St. Mihiel. On 20 April the Germans opened a heavy bombardment followed by a regimental attack. Boxing in the



Americans advance upon Cantigny. (National Archives)

defenders with artillery, the Germans overwhelmed two American companies and seized the trench line. The 26th Division botched the counterattacks; when it finally advanced, the Americans found that the enemy had withdrawn. The Germans left behind 160 dead, but they took over 100 prisoners and inflicted over 650 casualties. Pershing was infuriated. In the midst of the debate over amalgamation, he did not need a humiliating setback that raised questions about the Americans' ability to handle divisions and corps.

Much more satisfying to Pershing and the American leadership was the battle at Cantigny. In mid-April the 1st Division went north in response to the German Lys Offensive. Pétain had selected its sector near Montdidier, where the Germans had been stopped in front of Amiens. Once in line, the division's new commander, Maj. Gen. Robert L. Bullard, an aggressive, long-time regular, urged his French corps commander to give him an offensive mission. Finally, Pétain agreed that Bullard's men should attack to seize the village of Cantigny on commanding ground near the tip of the salient. Even with careful preparations and rehearsals, the American attack was not a sure thing: twice before, the French had taken and lost the key piece of terrain.

On the morning of 28 May, Col. Hanson Ely's 28th Infantry, supported by American and French artillery and by French

tanks, took the village in a well-executed assault. Thereafter the supporting French guns withdrew to deal with another large German offensive, leaving the Americans with only their own organic artillery to deal with German attempts to retake the area. The American gunners, however, proved up to the task and assisted in breaking up several actual or potential counterattacks. Altogether, the Americans threw back six counterattacks. After three days of fighting and constant artillery shelling, Ely and his men were replaced by the 18th Infantry. During their efforts in taking and holding Cantigny, the Americans lost almost 200 men killed and suffered another 800 casualties. It was a forerunner of successes to come.

Americans Help Stem the Tide, May–July 1918

On 27 May, the German high command launched its third spring offensive at the French lines in the Chemin des Dames area northeast of Paris. By the end of the first day the attackers had driven the French over the Aisne River, the second defensive line. By the next day they were across the Vesle River and driving toward the Marne. When the offensive eventually ground to a halt, German troops were within fifty miles of Paris, almost as close as they had come in 1914.

The offensive had caught the Allies flatfooted. With most of their reserves in the north, Foch and Pétain struggled to scrape up enough local reserves to form a new line. To the west, the American 1st Division extended its lines to free a French division for redeployment. On 30 May, Maj. Gen. Omar Bundy's 2d Division and Maj. Gen. Joseph T. Dickman's 3d Division began entering the line near Château-Thierry on the Marne and came under French command.

Loaded on trucks, troops of the 3d Division's 7th Machine Gun Battalion arrived on the Marne first and were in position to help French troops hold the main bridge over the river on 31 May. The next day Dickman's infantry arrived. For the next week, the division repulsed the limited German attacks in its sector. On 6 June the division assisted the French 10th Colonial Division in an attack to Hill 204 overlooking the Marne. The 3d Division held an eight-mile stretch of ground along the Marne for the next month.

On 1 June, Bundy's 2d Division assumed defensive positions astride the Paris-Metz highway west of Château-Thierry. In 1918 the 2d Division had a distinctive organization: it had a brigade of

Army regulars and a brigade of marines. Bundy placed the two brigades abreast with the marines to the west and the regulars to the east. As the Americans settled into their positions, the French troops withdrew through the 2d Division's lines. Across from Bundy's lines, the Germans moved into Belleau Wood and the surrounding area while their artillery shelled the American positions. Nevertheless, the German advance had shot its bolt and the Americans had no difficulty holding their ground.

The French then ordered the 2d Division to seize Belleau Wood and the villages of Bouresches and Vaux to the east. The attack began on 6 June. Over the next month the infantrymen and marines fought a bloody, toe-to-toe battle against four German divisions. The struggle for Belleau Wood was particularly hard fought, with the Germans testing the mettle of the Americans. By 17 June the marines had taken Bouresches. Six days later they cleared Belleau Wood, and on 1 July the infantrymen captured Vaux. Though the Americans had gained their objectives and inflicted over 10,000 casualties on the Germans, the price was reciprocally steep. Bundy's division suffered over 9,777 casualties, including 1,811 dead. One of the opposing German commanders noted that the division "must be considered a very good one and may even be reckoned as storm troops." The AEF had proved itself in combat.

While the 2d Division continued its battle in the tangled forest of Belleau Wood, the Germans launched their fourth offensive. One German army attacked southwesterly from the Amiens salient, while another launched a westward attack from the Marne salient. The German high command hoped to shorten their lines and ease their logistical difficulties by joining the two bulges in their lines. The French, however, having been forewarned of the offensive, launched a vigorous artillery strike on the German assault troops and disrupted the force of the attack. By 13 June both attacks were halted after only limited gains.

With these meager gains, the German high command planned yet another offensive against the French. Once again the Germans wanted to use two converging attacks to shorten their lines and draw off reserves from the British sector, thus setting the conditions for their future operations in Flanders. On 15 July one German army attacked south from positions east of Reims while another attacked southeast from the Marne salient. Again, the Allies were aware of the pending operation and launched a counterbarrage against the Germans. Moreover, the allied forces, now including the U.S. 42d Division and three

BARBED WIRE

Barbed wire was invented in the United States in 1873 as agricultural fencing. By the outbreak of World War I it had become an important element of field fortifications. Barbed-wire entanglements ten or more yards deep combined with trenches and machine guns to make the Western Front essentially impassible to large bodies of troops. The emplacement, maintenance, and removal of barbed-wire entanglements consumed the bulk of infantry patrols and much of the combat-engineering effort. New tactics and the introduction of improved equipment such as tanks and Bangalore torpedoes reduced, but by no means eliminated, barbed wire as a battlefield obstruction.

African-American infantry regiments of the 93d Division, withdrew from the forward lines, leaving the German artillery and infantry assaults to hit an empty bag. By the time the Germans reached the French and American main defensive line, their attack was played out.

The exception was the Marne sector, where French commanders did not want to allow the enemy a foothold over the river and so kept units exposed in their forward positions. The U.S. 3d Division had occupied the eastern flank of the French line since early June. Initially, Dickman's force was deployed in depth with two regiments forward and two in reserve, but by mid-July the division was defending a ten-mile front with four infantry regiments abreast. Nevertheless, Dickman established as much of an echelon defense as he could: an outpost line of rifle pits along the Marne River, backed by the main defensive line along the forward slopes of the hill line about 1,500 yards from the river, and a reserve line about 3,000 yards back.

In the early morning hours of 15 July the Germans began their attack against the 3d Division with a creeping barrage followed shortly by an assault crossing of the Marne. The weight of the attack came against Col. Edmund Butts' 30th Infantry and Col. Ulysses Grant McAlexander's 38th Infantry. After heavy fighting in the morning, when the 30th Infantry inflicted horrendous casualties on the Germans, Butts' men were forced back to a line along the hills where they stopped the Germans. Elsewhere



First Aid Station, by *Lester G. Hornby*, 1918 (Army Art Collection)

in the Marne sector the Germans made greater headway, up to five miles beyond the river at some points. McAlexander faced a more precarious position when the adjacent French division hastily retreated, leaving the 38th Infantry's right flank exposed. Turning some of the regiment to defend that flank, McAlexander also had to deal with a penetration of his main line. Although fighting on three sides, the riflemen and machine gunners of the 38th Infantry held, earning the sobriquet "Rock of the Marne." By the end of the day the 3d Division had stopped the German attack. Between the 30th and 38th Infantries the Americans had defeated six regiments from two German divisions. One German 1,700-man regiment was so badly cut up that the German leaders could only find 150 survivors at nightfall on 15 July. On the negative side of the ledger, four rifle companies of the 28th Division from the Pennsylvania National Guard had been attached to the French division to the east of the 38th Infantry. When the French retreated, they neglected to inform the Pennsylvanians and the riflemen became surrounded. Most of them were killed or captured; only a few fought their way to the south to rejoin their parent division.

The Growing AEF

Prior to March 1918 Pershing's efforts to create a distinct American ground combat force had been checked by the shortage of transportation available for troops and the objectives and demands of the Allies. In December 1917 only 183,000 American soldiers were in France, comprising parts of five divisions and performing various service support functions. During the first three months of 1918 the number of Americans doubled, but only an additional two combat divisions had arrived. However, after April 1918 the various shipping arrangements with the Allies, along with improvements in the War Department, had begun to pay dividends as American troops began to pour into Europe. At the end of June over 900,000 Americans were in France, with 10,000 arriving daily.

In early July the AEF had reached the million-man mark, with twenty-three combat divisions (the equivalent of almost fifty Allied divisions). Six of the AEF's divisions had seen combat over the previous two months: two of those were holding segments of active front lines and four were in reserve positions. Six other divisions were training in the American sector around Chaumont, and another five were training with the British behind the front lines in the north. Four more were brigaded with French divisions for training along quiet sectors of the line, while the regiments of the 93d Division served in French divisions.

Since late 1917 Pershing had envisioned as the next step in establishing an independent American army the creation of American corps organizations with tactical command over American divisions. Toward this end he had established I Corps in January 1918 under the command of the unassuming but extremely capable Maj. Gen. Hunter Liggett. Over the next six months Liggett held administrative control over four American divisions, overseeing their training and interceding on their behalf with the French commanders. With the assistance of his effective chief of staff, Col. Malin Craig, Liggett also ensured that his corps staff and headquarters were trained. The I Corps spent much of its time collocated with the French XXXII Corps in the Pont-à-Mousson region north of Toul.

By the end of June the AEF had formed three more corps headquarters. In late February 1918 the II Army Corps assumed administrative control of the American troops training with the British. In June Maj. Gen. George W. Read took command; until that time the corps staff had reported directly to GHQ. During



Army Camp, by *George Harding*, 1917 (Army Art Collection)

the late spring the III and IV Army Corps came into existence and managed Americans training with the French Seventh and Eighth Armies, respectively. Eventually, General Bullard would assume command of the III Corps, while General Dickman would take over the IV Corps.

At the same time the AEF was organizing its first corps, Pershing was eyeing the front north of Toul, along the St. Mihiel salient, as the sector to employ them. Ever since the 1st Division initially occupied a sector north of Toul in early 1918, the AEF staff had planned to expand that sector into an area of operations first for an American corps, then for an American army. In May, once the military situation stabilized after the failure of the German offensives in March and April, General Foch proposed concentrating available U.S. divisions to establish a separate AEF sector and left it to Pétain and Pershing to work out the details. Subsequently, the two national commanders agreed that once four American divisions were in line along the Toul front, the sector would be turned over to the AEF. The AEF headquarters began to make arrangements to move units into the region, then

the Germans struck with their Marne Offensive on 27 May. The available U.S. divisions were sent northward to help stem the tide along the Marne.

By June nearly five American divisions were positioned in the Château-Thierry area. Forgoing the Toul sector for the time being, Pershing decided to use this concentration of American forces for the first tactical employment of an AEF corps. In mid-June, the AEF's GHQ ordered General Liggett and his I Corps headquarters to prepare to move to the Château-Thierry region. This marked a shift in doctrine resulting from the piecemeal commitment of divisions to stem the German offensives. Instead of operating with permanently assigned divisions, the corps echelon would consist of only a headquarters and some artillery, aviation, engineer, and technical units, with divisions and other subordinate formations assigned temporarily as the situation dictated. The change also reflected the French system of a more flexible corps organization that could be adapted to a particular mission.

Liggett and his I Corps staff arrived at La Ferte-sous-Jouarre, southwest of Château-Thierry, on 21 June. There, the I Corps assumed administrative control over the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 28th Divisions. More important, the corps began to work with the French III Corps that was holding the sector just west of Château-Thierry. A little less than two weeks later the I Corps took tactical control of the sector with the French 167th Division and the U.S. 26th Division. Perhaps fittingly, the corps assumed command on American Independence Day, 4 July 1918. Fourteen days later the I Corps would provide the pivot for the first large-scale Allied counteroffensive in 1918.

The AEF in the Aisne-Marne Campaign, July–August 1918

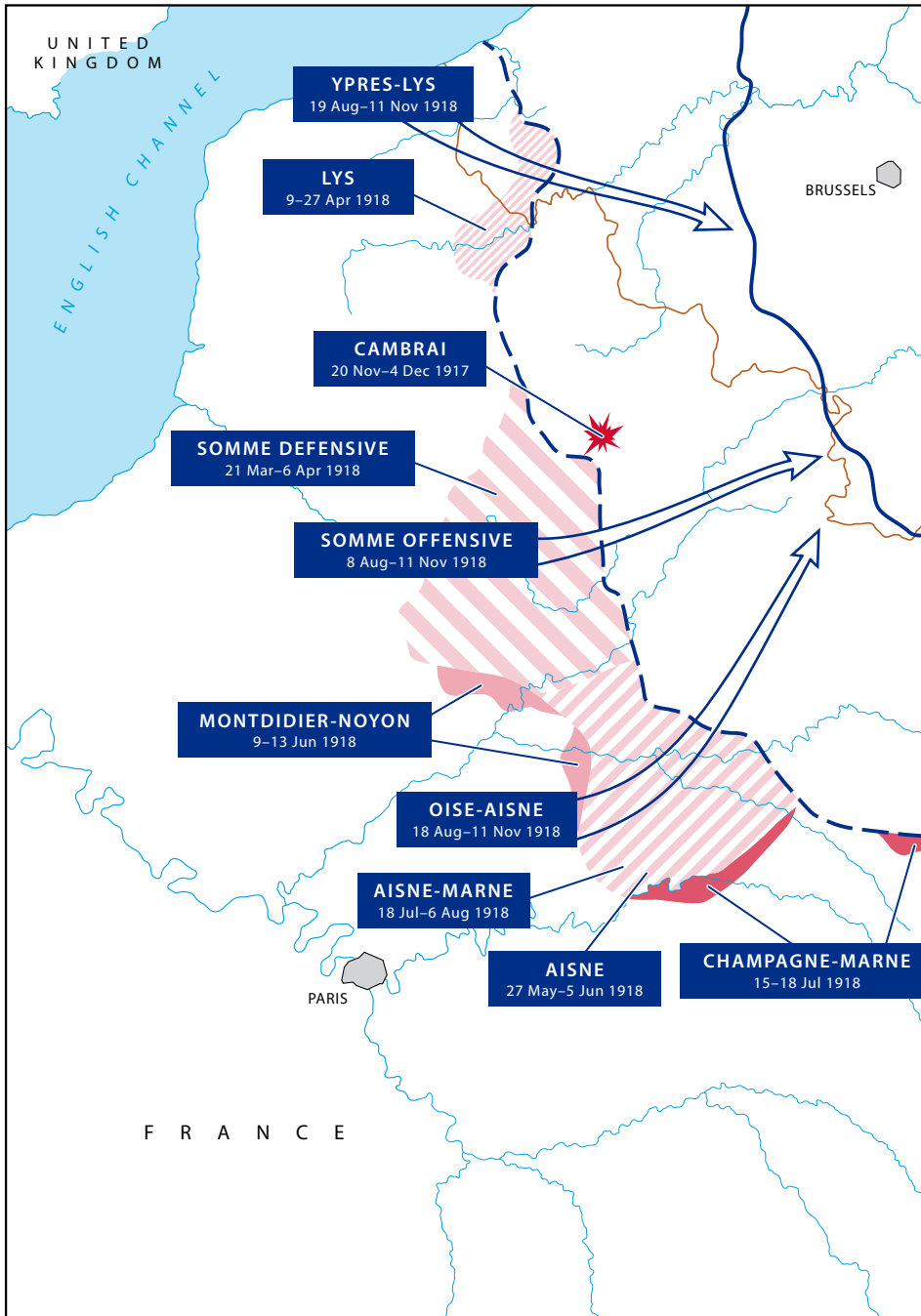
Even as the Germans launched their June and July offensives, General Foch had been looking for an opportunity to strike a counterblow. The Marne salient presented an excellent prospect. (See *Map 1*.) The bulge in the line was inherently weak as the German forces relied on a single railroad through Soissons for the majority of their supplies. In mid-June Foch directed Pétain to plan an attack against Soissons. After French intelligence warned that the Germans would attack east of Château-Thierry beginning on 15 July, Foch set the date for his counterattack as 18 July. Consequently, as the Germans were attacking on the eastern flank of the salient, the Allies would be striking against their western flank.

The Allied plan called for two French armies to advance on 18 July toward Braine on the Vesle River. In the north, the French Tenth Army would conduct the main attack between the Aisne and the Ourcq Rivers; in the south, the French Sixth Army would attack between the Ourcq and the Marne. Their mission was to cut the German lines of communications in the salient. The French Fifth and Ninth Armies on the eastern flank would join the attack after defeating the German offensive. Foch expected the reduction of the Marne salient to follow.

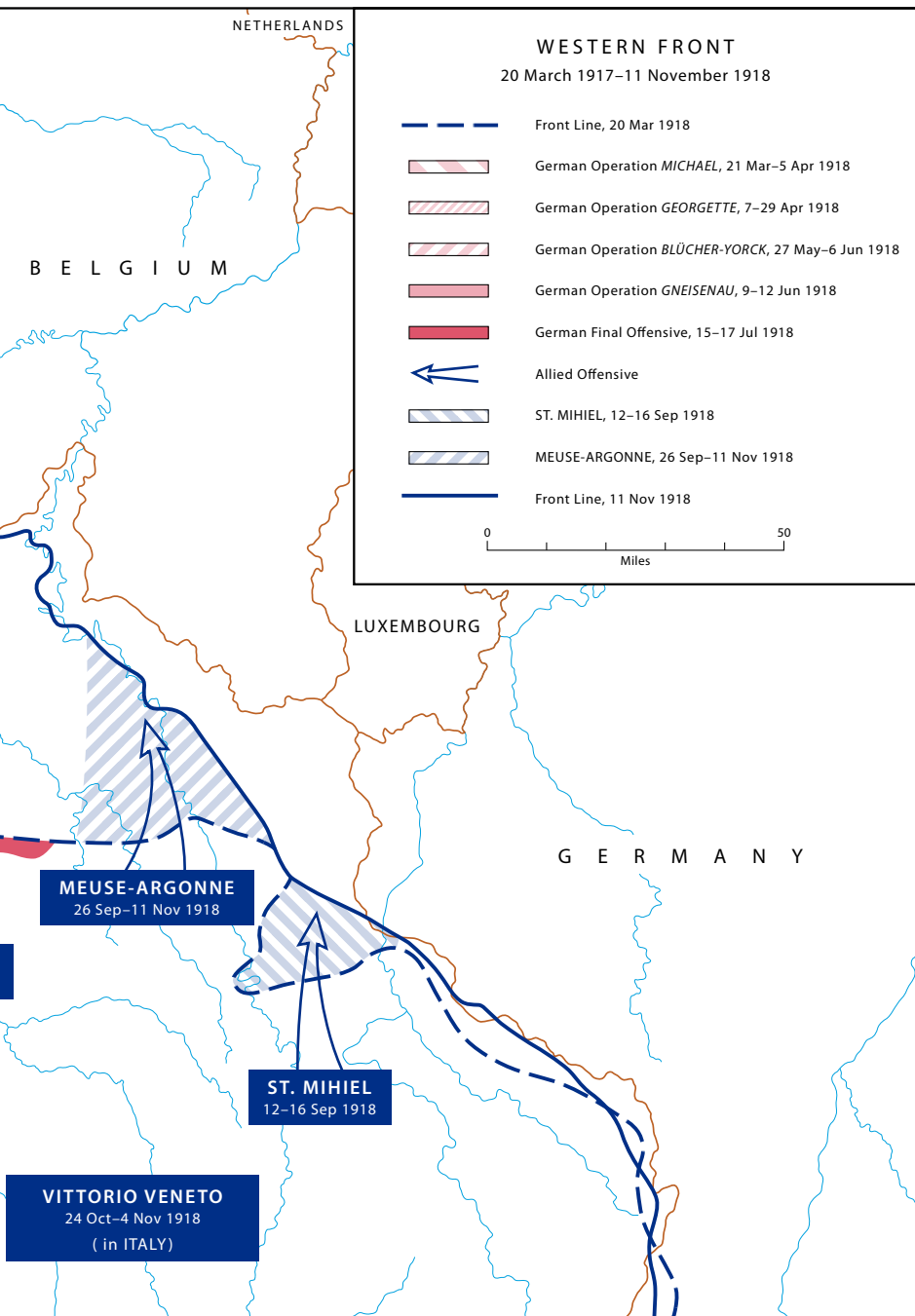
Under the cover of the forest of Villers-Cotterêts, the assault forces for the French Tenth Army gathered efficiently and secretly in the three days prior to the attack. Against the German defenders along the western flank of the salient, Foch had been able to gather twenty-three first-class divisions. Among them were the 1st and 2d Divisions assigned to the French XX Corps. Administratively the two U.S. divisions fell under General Bullard's III Corps, which had been rushed to the sector. Pershing had wanted Bullard to command the American troops; but Bullard arrived in the assembly areas too late to properly exercise tactical command, and he was instead attached to the XX Corps as an assistant commander. Three more American divisions would take part in the initial days of the operation. In the French Sixth Army area, the U.S. 4th Division supported two French corps with an infantry brigade apiece, while Liggett's I Corps with the 26th Division held the eastern flank of that army. Meanwhile, the 3d Division supported the French Ninth Army.

On 18 July the Franco-American attack came as a tactical and operational surprise to the Germans. To preserve secrecy many of the assault units had moved into attack positions during the night. Darkness, heavy rain, and mud hampered the U.S. divisions' movements to the front, and some of the 2d Division's infantry reached their jump-off point with only minutes to spare. The Allies also made very limited use of artillery prior to the attack to avoid revealing their intentions, employing only short but intensive preparatory fires. Once the attack began, a rolling barrage and 550 tanks supported the infantry.

Spearheading the French Tenth Army's attack, the XX Corps began a dawn assault to seize the high ground to the south of Soissons and cut the key rail lines. It attacked on a three-division front: Maj. Gen. Charles Summerall's 1st Division on the northern flank, General Harbord's 2d Division on the southern, and the



MAP 1



TANKS

After two years of stalemate on the Western Front, the Allies began searching for technological solutions to the deadlock. Both France and Britain independently began producing an armored chassis on caterpillar tracks armed with cannon and machine guns that could overcome German defenses and break through the lines. The British initially used a small number of these vehicles with limited results in September 1916. The Germans developed countermeasures in time to blunt the first use of massed armor by the French in April 1917. Although these early “tanks” proved mechanically unreliable, demand for additional vehicles remained high. However, neither French, American, nor British industry could supply vehicles in large numbers, and only a limited number of tanks were available for American use in late 1918.

Moroccan 1st Division (French Army) in the center. On 18 July both American divisions made remarkable progress, advancing over three miles and achieving their objectives by 0800. The next day the corps renewed its attack. The Germans, however, had been heavily reinforced with machine guns and artillery during the night; the French and American infantry found the advance slower and more costly. After a day of hard fighting, Harbord asked for the relief of his division; it was replaced by a French division. In two days the 2d Division had advanced more than eight miles and captured 3,000 prisoners and 66 field guns, at a cost of almost 4,000 men. Summerall’s division remained in line for another three days and cut the Soissons–Château-Thierry highway and the Villers-Cotterêts railroad and held the ground that dominated Soissons. In its five-day battle the 1st Division captured 3,800 prisoners and 70 guns from the 7 German divisions used against it. For these gains, the division paid a heavy price: 7,000 casualties (1,000 killed and a 73 percent casualty rate among the infantry’s field officers). Despite the high cost, the XX Corps’ attack was an operational success. To counter the attack south of Soissons, the German high command halted its offensive east of Château-Thierry and withdrew from its footholds over the Marne. Furthermore, the interdiction of the supply line through Soissons made the Marne salient untenable and the Germans began to withdraw.



Street in Soissons, September 1918 (National Archives)

To the south of the Tenth Army, the Sixth Army also attacked on 18 July, with Maj. Gen. George H. Cameron's 4th Division supporting the French II and VII Corps. From 18 to 20 July Cameron's division advanced about four miles in two separate sectors. More significantly, Liggett's I Corps advanced up the spine of the Marne salient for four weeks. With the American 26th Division and the French 167th Division, I Corps pushed beyond the old Belleau Wood battlegrounds and advanced about ten miles from 18 to 25 July. For the next three weeks the corps made steady gains against the tenacious German defenders. Advancing with the 42d Division from 25 July to 3 August and then the 4th Division from 3 to 12 August, the American corps crossed the Ourcq and then the Vesle, a distance of almost fifteen miles. On 12 August, Liggett and his headquarters were withdrawn to the Toul sector in preparation for the next offensive.

To the east of Château-Thierry, the AEF troops also played a significant role. The 3d Division had been a mainstay of this portion of the Marne line since early June. Initially, its role was to pin down German forces as the Sixth and Tenth Armies advanced. After 20 July, as part of the French XXXVIII Corps, the division crossed the Marne, cleared the northern bank, and pursued the Germans as they withdrew. The division pushed forward until relieved by the 32d Division on 29 July. The 32d Division continued

the advance until it reached the Vesle. On 1 August, Bullard's III Corps arrived and assumed tactical control of the 32d, 28th, and 3d Divisions from the French XXXVIII Corps. Thus for a few days the American I and III Corps stood side by side on the front lines.

At the end of the first week of August, the Aisne-Marne Campaign came to a close. The campaign successfully removed the threat against Paris and freed several important railroads for Allied use. It also eliminated the German high command's plans for another offensive against the British in Flanders. More important, the campaign effectively seized the initiative from the Germans and gave it to Foch and his national commanders. The chance had passed for Germany to defeat Britain and France before the United States could intervene in force.

To maintain pressure on the Germans, Foch had Pétain continue the advance beyond the Vesle. From mid-August to mid-September this operation included troops from the American III Corps before they withdrew southward to join the new American First Army. From 28 August to 1 September Maj. Gen. William G. Haan's 32d Division attacked north of Soissons, seizing the key town of Juvigny and making a two-and-a-half-mile penetration of the German lines. In early September, the 28th and the 77th Divisions attacked northward, almost reaching the Aisne River by 16 September.

An American Army and St. Mihiel, September 1918

Shortly after the dramatic advance of the 1st and 2d Divisions south of Soissons, Pershing renewed his efforts for an independent American field army. On 21 July he approached Pétain about organizing an army and establishing its own distinct area of operations. Pershing wanted one sector in the active Marne front and another in a more quiet sector, the Toul area, where he could send exhausted units to rest and refit. He wanted to form the American First Army in the active sector and take command himself. Pétain agreed in principle to Pershing's plans, and together they met with Foch. Foch was favorably disposed to the plan but made no firm commitment.

Three days later, as the Allied forces were approaching the Ourcq River, Foch called a meeting of his senior military commanders to lay out his plan to maintain the initiative on the Western Front. He envisioned a set of limited offensives aimed at freeing important railroads and key resources. Beside the

ongoing Marne Campaign, these included operations to reduce the Lys and Amiens salients in the north and the St. Mihiel salient in the south. The latter was to be an American operation. Upon completion of these limited operations, Foch wanted a general offensive along the entire front, pushing to end the war in the summer of 1919.

On the same day, Pershing officially announced the formation of First Army, with an effective date of 10 August 1918. When on 4 August the I and III Corps assumed adjacent sectors south of the Vesle, arrangements were made to extend both their fronts to cover the entire French Sixth Army's sector. By 8 August the two corps held a front of eight miles and had control of six American and two French divisions. Pétain's headquarters issued orders affecting the relief of the Sixth Army by the American First. On 10 August Pershing achieved one of his major objectives for the AEF, the formation of an independent American army composed of American corps and American divisions.

These arrangements were quickly overtaken by events. By the time Pétain and Pershing could establish a sector for an American army, the situation along the Vesle had stabilized. With no need or desire to occupy an inactive sector, Pershing arranged with Pétain to begin moving his army headquarters southward to prepare for operations against the St. Mihiel salient. Leaving Pétain with the American III Corps of three divisions, Pershing began shifting other American units to the St. Mihiel region. American troops from the Vesle region, the Vosges, the training areas around Chaumont, and the British sector were concentrated along the salient. Initially, the forces available to the American First Army were three American corps of fourteen divisions and a French corps of three divisions.

Just as the concentration of American forces was making headway, Foch, newly promoted to Marshal of France, came to Pershing's headquarters on 30 August. Pershing and his staff had been planning to achieve Foch's desire to reduce the St. Mihiel salient and then push the Germans back along the whole front as stated at the 24 July conference. But now, several weeks later, Foch had reconsidered the need for the St. Mihiel operation. Based on a suggestion from Marshal Haig, the British commander, Foch wanted to launch a series of converging attacks against the Germans' lateral lines of communications. This plan called for British forces to attack southeasterly and the Franco-American forces to attack northward from the Meuse-Argonne region in

a vast double envelopment against the German Army. With the northward attack, a full reduction of the St. Mihiel salient would be unnecessary. Foch further complicated the situation by proposing to divide the American army into two pieces on either side of the Meuse-Argonne, separated by a French army. He made his proposal even more uninviting to the AEF by detailing two French generals to “assist” the Americans.

Not surprisingly, Pershing fervently objected to the suggestion of dividing the American forces. He offered counterproposals, which Foch dismissed as impractical. Quickly, the tempers of the two commanders flared. Foch demanded to know if the American commander wanted to go into battle. Pershing replied, “Most assuredly, but as an American Army.” Having reached an impasse, Foch departed.

Once again Pershing turned to his friend Pétain for assistance. Pétain wanted American support and cooperation and believed that a strong AEF with its own sector of the front was in the best interest of the French Army. Together, Pétain and Pershing met with Foch on 2 September. Supported by Pétain, Pershing offered to assume responsibility for the entire sector of the front from Pont-à-Mousson through the valley of the Meuse to the Argonne Forest, a length of about ninety miles. The AEF commander contended that the attack against the St. Mihiel salient could begin within two weeks and that it offered operational advantages to Foch’s desired attack along the Meuse as well as the potential to build confidence and experience in the American First Army. Foch insisted that the operation be limited to simply reducing the salient and that the Americans would have to attack northward by the end of the month. Pershing noted that after his army had eliminated the salient it could pivot and still launch its offensive against the Meuse-Argonne on schedule. Finally, the three commanders agreed to two distinct American operations supported by French troops and equipment: the elimination of the St. Mihiel salient beginning about 10 September and the larger offensive along the west bank of the Meuse starting between 20 and 25 September.

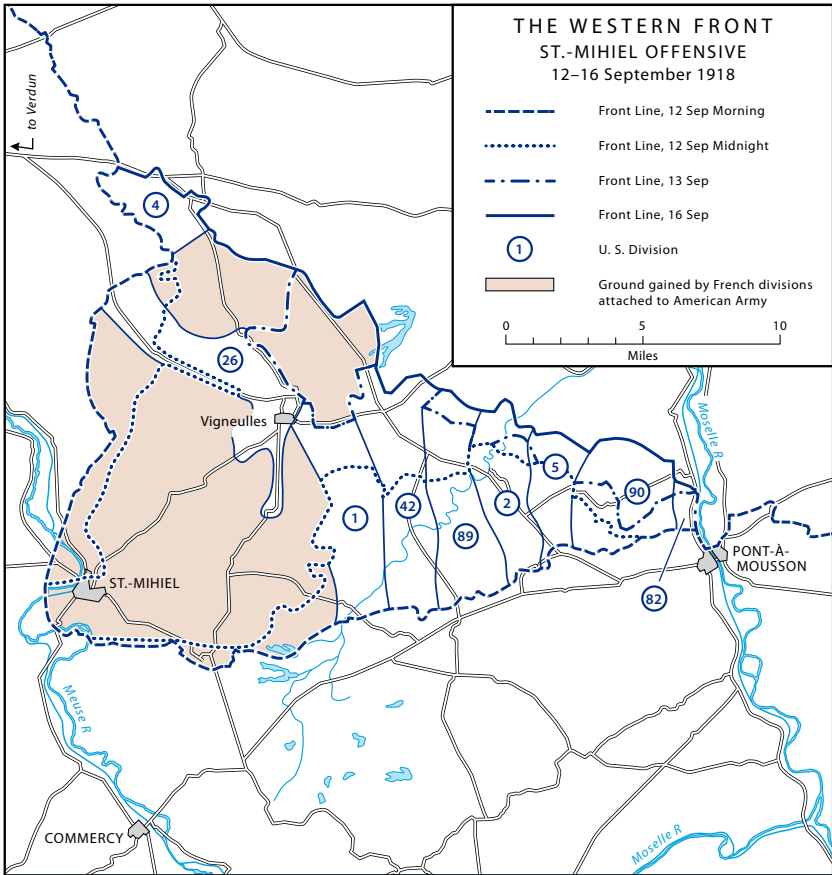
With approval to proceed with the St. Mihiel Offensive, the AEF staff began the final planning for the operation. Resulting from a German offensive in September 1914, the St. Mihiel salient was a 200-square-mile triangle jutting 14 miles into the Allied lines between the Moselle and Meuse Rivers. Bounded by Pont-à-



American tank crossing a trench at St. Mihiel (National Archives)

Mousson to the south, St. Mihiel to the west, and the Verdun area to the north, the terrain was mostly rolling plain, heavily wooded in spots. After three years of occupation, the Germans had turned the area into a fortress with heavy bands of barbed wire and strong artillery and machine gun emplacements. Eight divisions defended the salient, with five more in reserve.

The Americans planned to make near-simultaneous attacks against the two flanks of the salient while an attached French corps of three divisions pressed the apex. On the western edge the newly formed V Army Corps would attack southeasterly toward Vigneulles with one American division, one French division, and one American brigade. The corps' remaining infantry brigade would be held in reserve. General Cameron, who had impressed Pershing in the July operations, commanded the corps. On the salient's southern flank the IV Corps, now under General Dickman, was in line to the right of the French and would attack with three divisions with one division held back in reserve. The experienced I Corps held the far right of the Allied sector. It would attack with four divisions on line and another in reserve. Pershing also had three additional divisions in army reserve. The I and IV Corps were to attack northward at 0500, the French corps an hour later, and the V Corps at 0800 (*Map 2*).



MAP 2

Pershing was determined not to fail in his first operation as an army commander. To support his forces he arranged for the use of over 3,000 guns, 1,400 planes, and 267 tanks. The British and the French provided the vast majority of artillery, planes, and tanks, though a large number of the planes and some of the tanks were manned by Americans. Initially, to maintain the element of surprise, Pershing was going to have little to no artillery fire before the attack; but in the end he decided to use a four-hour bombardment along the southern flank and a seven-hour one along the western flank. In addition, Pershing, at the suggestion of Pétain, developed an elaborate scheme to deceive the Germans

AIRPOWER

All major European armies possessed airplanes prior to the opening of hostilities in August 1914, but none believed they would play a major role during a war. Military aircraft proved themselves far more capable than originally envisioned, however, and by mid-1915 the combatants actively sought to produce a new generation of technologically superior warplanes every twelve months or so. Aircraft development in the United States unfortunately remained stagnant due to limited funding and the Wright brothers' efforts to monopolize the domestic aviation industry. When the AEF Air Service took to the skies over the Western Front in early 1918 it did so in borrowed French and British planes, and faced an experienced opponent equipped with the most capable combat aircraft in the world.

into thinking that the first blow would come to the south near Belfort; the scheme worked well enough to get the Germans to move three divisions into that sector.

At 0100 on 12 September the artillery began its bombardments. As planned, four hours later the infantry and tanks of the I and IV Corps attacked on a twelve-mile front. Pivoting on the I Corps, Dickman's infantrymen swept ahead over five miles. Meanwhile, the V Corps kicked off its attack at 0800, also making good progress. The Germans put up a determined defense long enough to retreat in good order. (They had been ordered to withdraw from the salient on 8 September but had been slow in executing the order.) By the end of the day the 1st Division, advancing from the south, was within striking distance of Vigneulles and ten miles from the advancing columns of the V Corps' 26th Division.

On the afternoon of 12 September Pershing learned that columns of Germans were retreating on roads from Vigneulles and urged both the 1st and 26th Divisions to continue their attacks through the night. Despite having made a very deliberate advance during the day, the 26th Division moved quickly throughout the night; one regiment captured Vigneulles by 0230 on 13 September. At dawn a brigade of the 1st Division had made contact with the New Englanders. With the capture of Vigneulles and the linkup of the two converging American columns, the critical part of

operation was over. By the end of the day the First Army had taken practically all its objectives.

In two days the American soldiers had cleared a salient that had remained virtually undisturbed for three years. While suffering 7,000 casualties, the American Army inflicted over 17,000 casualties, mostly prisoners, on the German defenders as well as seizing 450 artillery pieces and a large amount of war stores. Although the defenders had planned to leave the salient, the attack's timing came as a surprise and hurried their withdrawal. The operation freed the Paris-Nancy railroad and secured the American rear for the upcoming northward thrust. More important, the battle gave Pershing and his First Army staff experience in directing a battle of several corps supported by tanks and aircraft. It would be needed for the much larger and complicated operation along the Meuse.

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive, September–November 1918

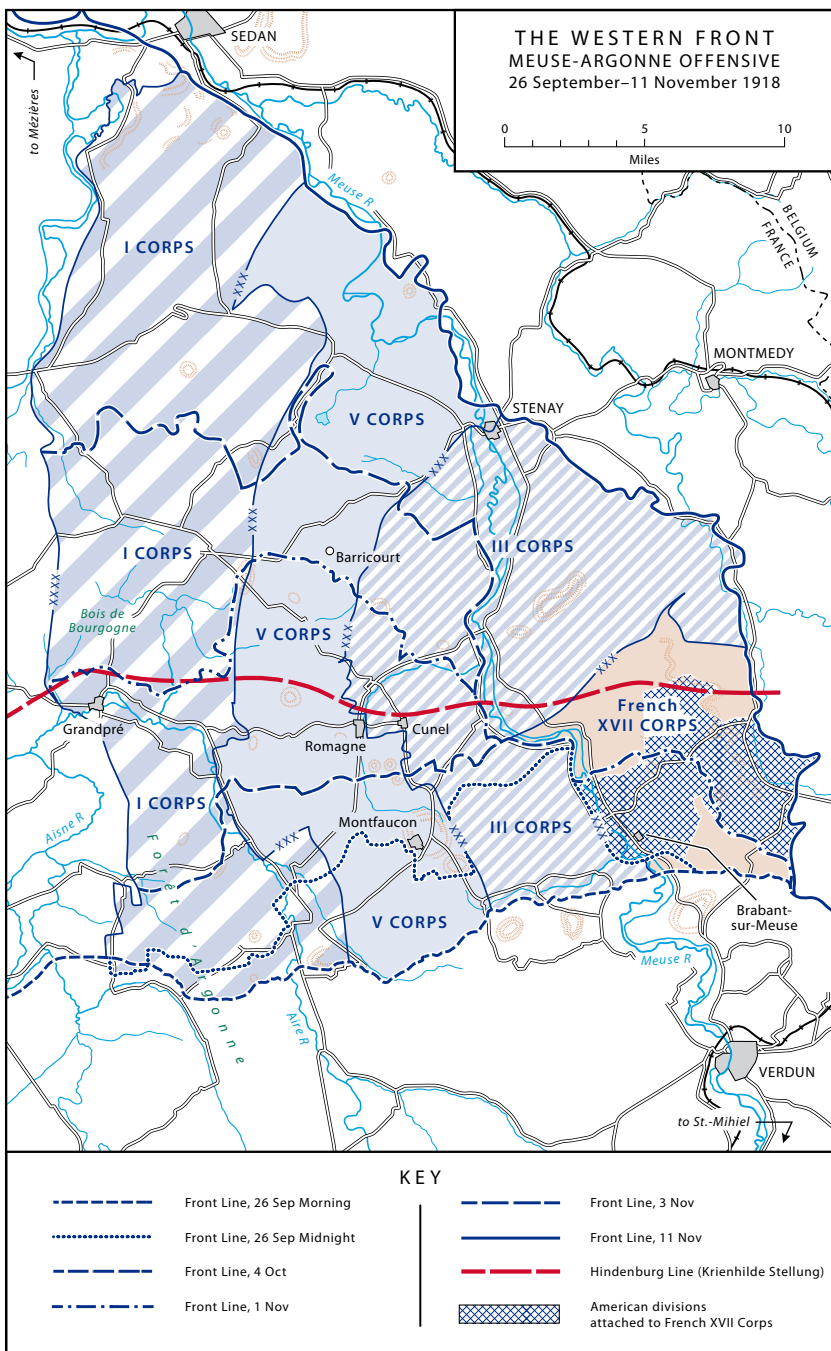
With the end of major operations on the St. Mihiel front, the main effort of Pershing and the AEF shifted forty miles to the northwest along the west bank of the Meuse. Over the next two weeks, the AEF executed a complex and massive movement of troops, artillery, and supplies to its new battleground. The transfer involved 820,000 men: 220,000 French and Italian troops left the area, and about 600,000 Americans entered. Of the fifteen American divisions that took over the sector, seven had been involved in the St. Mihiel operation, three came from the Vesle sector, three from the area of Soissons, one near Bar-le-Duc, and one from a training area. The movement was confined to the hours of darkness to maintain secrecy and further limited by the availability of only three roads capable of supporting heavy traffic. That it took place without a serious setback was largely attributable to the careful supervision of a young staff officer from Pershing's First Army, Col. George C. Marshall.

The AEF's attack into the Meuse-Argonne region was part of Foch's larger general offensive against the Germans, with the British and French attacking in their respective sectors, which would force the Germans to defend the entire front. Foch's objective was to cut the enemy's vital lateral rail lines and compel the Germans to retire inside their own frontier before the end of 1918. For this grand offensive, Foch had 220 divisions, of which 42 were the big divisions of the AEF.



Soldiers Marching Past Church, by *Jules Andre Smith*, 1919
(Army Art Collection)

The American First Army would attack northward in conjunction with the French Fourth Army. Its main objective was the rail line between Carignan-Sedan-Mézières, an artery of the important rail system running through Luxembourg, Thionville,



MAP 3

and Metz. That objective was about thirty miles from the jump-off line north of Verdun. In addition, by attacking east of the Argonne Forest, the First Army's offensive would outflank the German forces along the Aisne, in front of their French counterparts to the west (*Map 3*).

The American army's area of operations was fifteen to twenty miles wide, bounded by the unfordable Meuse River on the east and the dense Argonne Forest and the Aire River on the west. The heights of the Meuse dominated the east side of the American sector, while the Argonne sat on high ground that commanded the western side. Between the river and the forest, a hogback ridge ran southeast and northwest from Montfaucon, Cunel, and Barricourt. A series of three lateral hill lines presented barriers to a northward advance. In addition to the Argonne, the area was dotted with various woods that presented even more obstacles to the American advance.

For their defense of the area, the Germans took full advantage of the rugged terrain. The high ground on either flank gave them excellent observation points from which to rain artillery on the Americans. Moreover, like the St. Mihiel salient, the Germans had occupied the area for several years and had developed an elaborate defensive system of four fortified lines featuring a dense network of wire entanglements, machine gun positions with interlocking fires, and concrete fighting posts. In between these trench lines, the Germans had developed a series of intermediate strong points in the numerous woods and knolls. The defensive system was about fifteen miles deep with five divisions on line and another seven in immediate reserve. Petain believed that the defenses were so strong that the Americans would do well if they captured Montfaucon, on the second line, before winter.

Against this imposing defense, the American First Army mustered over 600,000 men. It would attack with nine divisions on line and another five in reserve, with Bullard's III Corps on the east flank, Cameron's V Corps in the center, and Liggett's I Corps on the west flank. A total of 2,700 pieces of artillery, 189 tanks, and 821 aircraft supported the American infantrymen.

Pershing and his staff envisioned the offensive in two stages. First, U.S. forces would advance about ten miles and penetrate three of the German lines, clearing the Argonne Forest to link up with the French Fourth Army at Grandpré. The second stage would consist of an advance of ten miles to outflank the enemy positions along the Aisne and prepare for further attacks toward Sedan and

Mézières on the Meuse River. Additional operations would then clear the heights along the east bank of the Meuse.

The initial attack would kick off on 26 September. The operations plan called for two thrusts on either side of the high ground around Montfaucon, with a linkup achieved before the Germans could bring in additional reinforcements. The V Corps would make the main attack, taking Montfaucon and penetrating the second German line. On either side, the I and III Corps would advance to protect the army's flanks, while their corps artillery suppressed the German artillery. Pershing wanted to seize Cunel and, to its west, Romagne, by the end of the second day.

At 0530, after a three-hour artillery bombardment, the three corps launched their attacks. Despite a heavy fog, the rugged terrain, and the network of barbed wire, the weight of the American onslaught quickly overran the Germans' forward positions. On both flanks, the corps made good progress. In the III Corps sector, Maj. Gen. John Hines' 4th Division pushed ahead about four miles, penetrated the German second line, and defeated several counterattacks in the process. On the western flank, Liggett's corps reached its objectives, advancing three miles on the open ground to the east of the Argonne. Maj. Gen. Robert Alexander's 77th Division made lesser gains in the Argonne itself. In the center, however, the V Corps experienced problems and was checked to the south of Montfaucon; it was not until the next day that Cameron's men were able to seize the position.

Throughout the remainder of September, the First Army slowly plodded forward. Heavy rains on 27–28 September bogged down the few tanks that had not already succumbed to mechanical failure. The rains also interfered with the forward movement of the supporting artillery and the resupply efforts as the already congested roads became muddy. Moreover, the Germans had used the delay in front of Montfaucon to rush local reserves to the strong positions in the center of their line, south of Cunel and Romagne. As the American battalions and companies encountered German machine gun positions in depth, the advance slowed further. Once the American infantry silenced the forward positions, supporting guns to the rear opened fire. In addition, the German artillery poured enfilading fire onto the attackers from the heights of the Meuse and the Argonne Forest. The advance had become a continuous series of bloody, hard-fought engagements.

Not all the First Army's difficulties came from the enemy or the weather. Of the nine divisions in the initial assault, only three (the

4th, 28th, and 77th) had significant combat experience. The 79th Division, which had the critical mission to take Montfaucon, had been in France for only seven weeks. The heavy fog and rain and the broken terrain exacerbated the situation for the inexperienced troops. Many divisions suffered from a lack of coordination among their own units and liaison with adjoining and higher units. Teamwork between the infantry and their supporting artillery often proved awkward and ineffective, especially in those divisions that had to rely on artillery brigades from other divisions because their own brigades were unavailable.

Overcoming these problems, the First Army advanced eight miles into the German lines by the end of September. Remarkably, it had fought through some of the strongest positions on the Western Front and captured 9,000 prisoners and a large amount of war supplies, including 100 guns. With the severity of the fighting and the intermingling of units in the twisted terrain, Pershing had little choice but to pause to reorganize.

Elsewhere on the Western Front, the remainder of Foch's general offensive had also slowed. The effort in Flanders had bogged down in the rain and mud, while the French armies in the center of the Allied line had not yet begun their attacks. Along the Somme, Haig's British armies did make a penetration of the German Hindenburg Line, with the help of the 27th and 30th Divisions of the AEF's II Corps. The British expanded the penetration to create a gap all the way through the German fortifications; but at the beginning of October, the British had to pause to improve their own lines of communications.

During the first days of October, Pershing took advantage of the pause to rotate three battle-hardened divisions (the 3d, 32d, and 1st) into the line, relieving some of the less experienced (the 37th, 79th, and 35th). As the First Army reorganized its line, the Germans also strengthened their position with six new divisions brought into the area for a total of eleven. The numerical odds were beginning to even.

At 0530 on 4 October the First Army renewed its general attack. The III and V Corps were to take the heights around Cunel and Romagne, respectively. Meanwhile, the I Corps was to neutralize the enemy's flanking fire from the Argonne and gain some room to maneuver around the forest. The fighting was especially severe. The American infantry launched a series of frontal attacks to penetrate the German lines and then to exploit the exposed enemy flanks. Progress was slow. The III and V Corps made some gains

against their objectives, but the Cunel and Romagne heights remained in German hands. On the west, the 1st Division advanced three miles and the I Corps captured an important ridge on the east edge of the Argonne. As new American divisions were rotated into line, the Germans continued their reinforcement efforts; and by 6 October they had twenty-seven divisions in the area.

As the two corps on the east continued their fight for high ground in the center of the First Army sector, Liggett's I Corps executed an effective flanking operation. On 7 October, as the 77th Division attacked northward in the Argonne, Liggett sent the 82d Division almost due west into the rear of the German positions. By noon the Germans were withdrawing from the forest. By 10 October, the I Corps had cleared the forest.

With the divisions of First Army fighting in the Meuse-Argonne region, other American divisions were providing crucial assistance to the French and British advances. To the north, two divisions of General Read's II Corps continued to support the British advance. The 2d Division (now commanded by Maj. Gen. John A. Lejeune of the Marine Corps) operated with the French Fourth Army on the First Army's western flank. Lejeune's soldiers and marines captured Mont Blanc Ridge, which provided the only natural defensive line south of the Aisne River, in a hard-fought battle from 2 to 4 October. On 10 October the 36th Division relieved the 2d Division and advanced to the Aisne River by 13 October, which brought the French Fourth Army on line with the American First Army.

On 8 October Pershing had the French XVII Corps attack across the Meuse near Brabant, due east of Montfaucon. The corps' two French and two American divisions advanced two miles and captured 3,000 prisoners and several important observation points. This limited operation also forced the Germans to divert divisions away from the main battleground between the Meuse and the Argonne.

On 14 October the First Army launched a general assault all along the German lines. The III and V Corps once again aimed at taking the fortified hills and forests of the Cunel-Romagne front. Over the next four days the 3d, 5th, and 32d Divisions battled for and captured the vital strong points. On the western flank, the I Corps advanced to the southern half of Grandpré on 16 October. By the third week in October the First Army had reached most of the objectives of the first phase of the campaign: penetration of the third German line and clearing of the Argonne.

SGT. ALVIN C. YORK (1887–1964)

On 8 October 1918, members of the 82d Division (“All American”) were attacking westward into the Argonne Forest to outflank strong German positions. Among the attackers was a lean backwoodsman from Tennessee, Acting Sgt. Alvin York. When heavy enemy fire slowed his regiment’s attack, York and a patrol were sent to suppress the machine gun positions. Working its way behind the German lines, the patrol surprised an enemy battalion headquarters and forced its surrender. German fire soon wounded over half the patrol. York single-handedly silenced the German fire, killing around twenty of the enemy in the process. He and the remainder of the patrol led 132 prisoners back to American lines. York received the Medal of Honor for his actions.



Sergeant York
(National Archives)

By mid-October Pershing realized that too much of the operational and tactical direction of the war was concentrated in his hands. As AEF commander, he was the American theater commander responsible for the administration, training, and supplying of the American troops in France as well as coordination with the other national commanders. In addition, he was the field commander for three corps of fourteen divisions in a desperate fight over rough terrain. Moreover, the First Army had become unwieldy, with over a million men along an 83-mile front.

On 12 October Pershing organized the American Second Army and named Bullard its commander. Bullard and his army assumed control over thirty-four miles of the front—the quiet sector between the Meuse and the Moselle south of Verdun. The active Meuse-Argonne sector remained the First Army’s responsibility, and on 16 October General Liggett assumed command of that army.

Pershing could now focus his attention on the larger strategic issues of theater command.

After visiting the First Army's corps and divisions, Liggett discovered that the Army was in deplorable shape after weeks of continuous and bitter fighting. Several divisions were combat ineffective, having less than 25 percent of their authorized strength. Liggett estimated that there were over 100,000 stragglers, which drained the army's strength. A lack of draft animals immobilized the artillery. The army needed to rest and refit, so for the next two weeks Liggett allowed it to do just that and resisted pressure to do more than local attacks.

More important, however, Liggett retooled and remodeled the First Army. He took particular care in retraining his infantry and artillery. Some infantry received special training in techniques for attacking strong points, while the rest were trained to bypass these defenses. Artillery batteries laid out supporting plans to use interdicting fires to isolate objectives and to conduct counterbattery fires against German artillery. Liggett instilled in his commanders the need to maximize supporting fires and gas to suppress enemy defenses.

To prepare for the second phase of the offensive, Liggett ordered a series of limited attacks aimed at securing a suitable line of departure. Both III Corps, now under General Hines, and V Corps, now under General Summerall, launched local attacks to clear forests and seize hills in the center of the line. Some of these operations involved heavy and hard fighting, with the bloodiest being the I Corps' ten-day battle to capture Grandpré, which fell on 27 October. Meanwhile, Liggett and his army staff ensured that supplies were stockpiled and roads repaired. By the end of October the First Army was ready for the next general attack.

On 1 November Liggett's First Army resumed the offensive. The main objective was the Barricourt Ridge in the center, a realistic advance of five miles. Once the Americans secured the ridgeline, they would push west to maneuver around the Bourgogne Forest, link up with the French Fourth Army, then drive northeast toward Sedan. On the first day of the attack Summerall's corps, in the center, easily gained control of the ridgeline. Hines' corps, in the east, kept pace and advanced to the Meuse River. Only Dickman's corps, in the west, failed to gain much ground. On the following day, however, the I Corps made excellent progress and cleared the flank of the French Fourth Army. Over the next several days, Liggett's army continued to advance as fast as it could displace its



A trench of the Hindenburg Line, 3 November 1918
(National Archives)

artillery and supplies forward. At one point the advance was so rapid that it ran off the AEF headquarters' maps. By 4 November the First Army had elements along the heights overlooking the Meuse and was able to place artillery fire on the railroad from Sedan to Mézières. The Americans had achieved their objective.

Liggett's careful preparation of the First Army paid off. Infantry and artillery coordination was superb. Troops pushed through and around German strong points, while special assault troops reduced them. Improved staff work and coordination afforded the First Army the flexibility to bypass German defenses. Unlike former attacks that made strong first-day gains followed by smaller ones, this attack was different: the advance on the third day exceeded that of the first. Under Liggett's tutelage, the American units had finally developed into a well-trained, well-organized fighting force.

A week after Liggett's forces reached the Meuse, the warring nations signed the Armistice. The fighting ended at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month—11 November 1918.

The Meuse-Argonne Campaign was the greatest battle that the U.S. Army had fought in its history. Almost 1.25 million American troops had participated during the course of the 47-day campaign. American casualties were high—over 117,000—but the results were impressive. The American First Army had driven forty-three German divisions back about thirty miles over some of the most difficult terrain and most heavily fortified positions on the Western Front. It had inflicted over 120,000 casualties on the Germans and captured 468 guns.

AFTER THE ARMISTICE

Immediate Postwar Duties

American soldiers remained in Europe for some time after the fighting ended, guarding against renewed hostilities. A newly activated Third Army, with eight U.S. divisions organized into three corps, crossed the French border into Germany on 1 December 1918 to occupy the region around Koblenz, between Luxembourg and the Rhine River. Similarly, an Army regiment sent to Italy before the end of hostilities spent four months participating in the occupation of Austria. American occupation troops encountered no unusual difficulties with the populace, and their numbers were rapidly reduced after the Paris Peace Conference ended in May 1919. They numbered only about 15,000 by the beginning of 1920. After rejecting the Treaty of Versailles that resulted from the peace conference, the United States technically remained at war with Germany until a separate peace was signed in the summer of 1921. Occupying forces gradually withdrew after that, until the last thousand troops departed on 24 January 1923.



1st Division marching into Luxemburg, 21 November 1918
(National Archives)

After the Armistice, Army units continued to serve elsewhere in the world, including two generally unsuccessful expeditions into revolution-torn Russia. In August 1918 the chaos in Russia resulting from the Bolshevik seizure of power induced President Wilson to order the Army to join Allied forces in expeditions into Russian territory. Multinational forces entered Siberia via Vladivostok to safeguard various interests, and support anti-Bolshevik forces. One force, containing about 5,000 American troops under British command, suffered heavy casualties while guarding Allied war supplies and communication lines in the Murmansk-Archangel region of northern Russia before withdrawing in June 1919. A force of about 8,400, under Maj. Gen. William S. Graves, landed at Vladivostok. Its primary mission was to rescue Czech troops who had fought alongside the Russians with the goal of achieving independence for their homeland from the Austro-Hungarian empire, only to be trapped in the midst of the Russian civil war. Secondly Graves' force would curb Japanese expansionist tendencies in the region. The Siberian operation lasted until April 1920. Together these two forces incurred about 500 combat

casualties. While seen in the West as only a footnote to World War I, the American and Allied intervention into Russia was deeply resented by the eventually triumphant Reds and fostered suspicion in the minds of Soviet leaders for years to come.

Demobilization

Planning for demobilization had begun less than a month before the Armistice, because few in the United States had expected the war to end so quickly. Almost all officers and men in the Army became eligible for discharge when the fighting in Europe stopped. The War Department had to determine how to muster out these men as rapidly and equitably as possible, without unduly disrupting the national economy, while also maintaining an effective force for occupation and other postwar duties. It decided that demobilizing by units was most likely to achieve those goals. Units in the United States relocated to thirty demobilization centers around the country so their personnel could be out processed and discharged near their homes. Overseas units returned as quickly as shipping space could be found for them, processed through debarkation centers operated by the Transportation Service, and moved to the demobilization centers for deactivation and discharge. In practice the unit system was supplemented by a great many individual discharges and by the release of certain occupational groups, such as railroad workers and anthracite coal miners.

In the first full month of demobilization the Army released approximately 650,000 officers and men, and within nine months it had demobilized nearly 3.25 million. Demobilization of war industries and disposal of surplus materiel paralleled the release of soldiers, but the War Department kept a large reserve of weapons and materiel for peacetime or new emergency use. Despite the lack of advance planning, the demobilization process worked reasonably well.

The Army faced one major concern as the process unfolded. Reflecting its lack of planning for the conclusion of hostilities and return to a peacetime posture, the Army had no authority to enlist men to replace those being discharged. On 28 February 1919, Congress ended that dilemma by authorizing enlistments in the Regular Army for either one or three years. By the end of the year the Active Army, reduced to about 19,000 officers and 205,000 enlisted men, was again a regular volunteer force.



Troops arriving home from France, 1919 (National Archives)

In the summer of 1919, the War Department urged Congress to authorize the establishment of a permanent Regular Army of roughly 500,000 and a three-month universal training system that would permit quick expansion of this force to meet the demands of any new major war. Congress and American public opinion rejected these proposals. It was hard to believe that the defeat of Germany and the exhaustion of the other European powers did not guarantee there would be no major war on land for years to come. Although American leaders recognized the possibility of war with Japan, they assumed that such a war, if it came, would be primarily naval in character. Reliance on the Navy as the first line of national defense remained a cornerstone of U.S. military policy for the next two decades.

In keeping with a traditional distrust of foreign alliances and large military establishments, the American people proved unwilling to support an Army in being any larger than required to defend the Continental United States and its overseas territories and possessions, to sustain knowledge of the military arts, and to train inexpensive and voluntary reserve components. The Army



The Doughboy, by *Kerr Eby*, 1919 (Army Art Collection)

between the wars was thus a small “mobilization army,” focusing much of its time and energy on planning and preparing for future expansion to meet contingencies. As threats seemed to diminish around the world, the interest in funding even that small army began to wane. And because the Army had huge stocks of materiel left over from its belated production for World War I, there was little spending on modernization.

THE AMERICAN ARMY AND THE GREAT WAR

When the war ended, the American participants were convinced that the AEF had played a decisive role in the defeat of Germany. In 200 days of fighting the AEF had captured about 49,000 Germans and 1,400 guns. Over one million American soldiers in twenty-nine divisions saw active operations. The AEF lost over 320,000 casualties, of which 50,105 were killed and another 193,602 were wounded in action. In October the Americans held over 101 miles, or 23 percent, of the Western Front; in November, as the front contracted with the German retreat, the AEF held over 80 miles, or one-fifth of the line.

Obviously, some of these numbers paled in comparison to those of the rest of the Allies. For example, the French fought for four years with over 1.35 million men killed. Also, from July to November 1918, the French armies captured 139,000 Germans and 1,880 guns. Moreover, the AEF's achievements would not have been possible without Allied assistance. The French and British helped train and transport the American soldiers and supplied much of the artillery, tanks, and airplanes for the AEF. The French especially engendered the cooperation of the American army. General Pétain himself often intervened on behalf of Pershing and the AEF to establish an independent American army fighting on its own sector of the front. More than other Allied leaders, Pétain seemed to understand what the AEF meant to the Allied cause.

More than its achievements on the battlefield, the two-million-man AEF helped the Allied cause by its mere presence. Throughout 1918, while Germany became weaker, the Allied military became stronger by virtue of the growing AEF. Besides the sheer weight of numbers, the Americans also helped rejuvenate flagging Allied spirits, both on and off the battlefield. In short, the AEF provided sufficient advantage to assure victory for the Allies.

Pershing's AEF was the first modern American Army. It had deployed to Europe and fought alongside the Allies in a mass,

industrialized war. It never lacked élan—from Soissons to the banks of the Meuse, the AEF aggressively attacked its enemy. Although at the beginning of active operations the American soldiers showed more courage than skill, they and their leaders learned quickly. Several months later, the best American divisions showed considerable tactical skill in their battles in October and November 1918. Leaders like Generals Liggett and Hines proved able tacticians and understood the conditions on the Western Front. At the higher levels, the AEF staffs proved the equal of their Allied counterparts.

For the U.S. Army, the ground forces of World War II would be direct descendants of the AEF of 1918. Many World War II generals had been captains, majors, and colonels in the AEF, learning their tactics and trade on the battlefields of France. The Army staffs of World War II were organized and operated based on the precedents of the general staffs of the AEF's armies, corps, and divisions. In both wars, combat divisions were the means of projecting and measuring combat power, with divisions grouped in corps and supported by corps and army troops. A harbinger of the future, the American Army of World War I was more similar to those that followed than those that came before. The U.S. Army appeared ready to assume its place in the world as the land force of a great power.



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For more information on the U.S. Army in World War I, please visit the U.S. Army Center of Military History Web site (www.history.army.mil).



PIN : 201596-000