

THE U.S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR I, 1917–1918

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson addressed Congress, asking for a declaration of war against Germany. Just over two months earlier, on January 31, the German government had announced its resumption of “unrestricted submarine warfare.” With the announcement, German U-boats would without warning attempt to sink *all* ships traveling to or from British or French ports. Under the new strategy, U-boats had sunk three American merchant ships with a heavy loss of American life in March 1917. Two days after Wilson’s speech, the Senate overwhelmingly declared that a state of war existed between Germany and the United States. Two days later the House of Representatives followed suit. The United States had entered “the Great War.”

Since the United States went to war over the limited issue of Germany’s submarine warfare, the Wilson administration conceivably could have taken only a naval role against the German submarines. That role, however, never received fervent support from the Allied or the U.S. Army’s leadership. Pressure from both the British and French leaders 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. That participation in the decisive theater would give Wilson a larger role and greater leverage in deciding the peace that followed. Thus it would be on the battlefields and in the trenches of France that the U.S. Army would fight in 1917 and 1918.

The United States had joined a war that was entering into 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 from the English Channel to Switzerland that became known as the Western Front. To break this stalemate, each side sought to rupture the other’s



President Wilson

lines, using huge infantry armies supported by increasingly 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 penetrations. Into this stalemate the U.S. Army would throw a force of over 2 million men by the end of the war. Half of these men fought in the trenches of northern France, mostly in the last six months of the war. It would prove to be the military weight needed to tip the strategic balance in the favor of the Allies.

The U.S. Army Arrives in Europe

In the latter part of April 1917 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 Joffre. Characteristic of the lack of planning and unity between the two Allies, the missions had devised no common plan for American participation, nor had they even held joint sessions before meeting with the Americans. Public ceremonies were well coordinated and presented a common, unified front; in private, each delegation pressed its own national interests and viewpoints.

After obtaining American loans for their depleted war chests, the French and British officials proposed ways to best make use of American manpower. 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, offered his proposal first. To bolster sagging morale, the Frenchman suggested that an American division be sent to France to symbolize American participation. He proffered French help with the

CAPTAIN HARRY S. TRUMAN (1884–1972)

In April 1917, 33-year-old Harry Truman rejoined the Missouri National Guard in which he had served during 1905–1911. He was promptly elected a first lieutenant in the 2d Missouri Field Artillery. Two months after debarking in France as part of the 35th Division, Truman was promoted to captain and commander of Battery D. Instinctively grasping the best way to treat citizen-soldiers, Truman quickly turned his battery into an operationally skilled unit. The long-term importance of this command experience for Truman is difficult to overstate: psychologically, he proved himself a success for the first time in his life, even as he acquired a bias against “West Pointers” and their perceived disdain for citizen-soldiers.



Truman

training of the American units, but he was careful to point out that the United States should eventually have its own army.

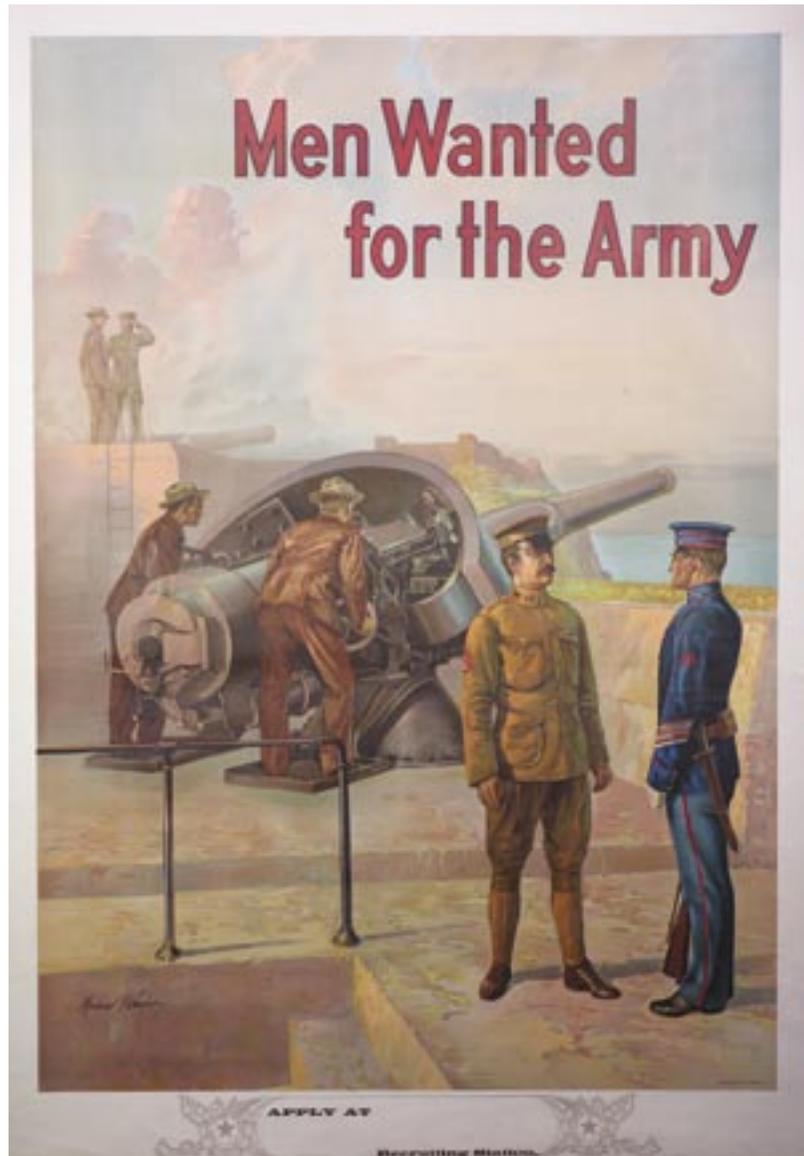
The British had their own solution to use American manpower. General Bridges, a distinguished divisional commander, proposed the rapid mobilization of 500,000 Americans to ship to England, where they would be trained, equipped, and incorporated into the British Army. This proposal would be the first of many schemes to integrate American battalions and regiments into one of the Allied armies.

Amalgamation, as the general concept of placing American soldiers into British or French units became known, had the advantage of expanding the existing military system 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 and create the entire framework for a modern army and then ship it overseas. That endeavor would require more shipping and more 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 especially on the professionalism of the American officer corps. 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 the decision to send a division overseas, Maj. Gen. Hugh L. Scott, the Chief of Staff, 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 division organization with four regiments of 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.

At the same time that Palmer's committee worked on its study, Scott 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 an infusion of recruits to reach full strength. By the time the regiments left for France, they were composed of about two-thirds raw recruits. Nevertheless, on June 8, Brig. Gen. William L. Sibert assumed command of the 1st Expeditionary Division and four days later sailed for France. The division would provide the nucleus of a larger American force in France.

Secretary of War Newton D. Baker selected General Pershing to command the larger expeditionary force. Ultimately, there was little doubt of the selection, even though Pershing was junior to five other major generals, including former Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood. Wood and the other candidates were quickly ruled out from active field command because of health or age, while Pershing was at fifty-six vigorous and robust. In addition, Pershing's record through-



Men Wanted for the U.S. Army (Coastal Artillery), *Michael P. Whelan, 1909*

Pershing demonstrated that he would remain loyal to the administration's policies, although he might personally disagree with them.

out his three decades of military service had been exceptional. By 1917 he had proven himself as a tough, experienced, and loyal commander. In particular, his command of the Punitive 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 was told to report to Washington, D.C.

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. Pershing first chose 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 Division, discussed the munitions situation, and went over the embarkation plans. He met with both Secretary Baker and President Wilson. On May 28, 1917, Pershing and his headquarters staff of 191 set sail for Europe.

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 June 26 the advance elements of the 1st 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 with the appearance of American troops. 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. Consequently, during the summer of 1917, Pershing and his small staff went about building the AEF's foundations.

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 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



A young soldier bids his family farewell in 1917.

the establishment of the AEF's sector. 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. On June 21 the staff officers departed on a four-day tour of a number of villages and possible training areas in Lorraine.

When the team returned, they recommended that the AEF assume the section of the Allied line from St. Mihiel to Belfort. They considered the training areas in the region adequate. With the greatest concentration of training grounds in the area of Gondrecourt and Neufchâteau, they further proposed that the American training effort be centered there. Yet the suitability of the region's training areas was not the major reason to select the Lorraine region as the American zone. Instead, Pershing's staff believed that the area offered important military objectives (coal and iron mines and vital railroads) within reasonable striking distance.

The recommendation of the Lorraine sector of the Western Front as the American zone of operations, however, was not especially imaginative. Even before Pershing left Washington, the French had advised the Americans to place their troops somewhere in the eastern half of the Allied line. By the time the inspection team visited the area, the French had made considerable progress in preparing training areas for the AEF. In so doing, they simply took a realistic and practical view of the situation.

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 and provided 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 north 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 military situation of 1917 had determined that the American sector would be on the Allied southern flank, 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, since only a relative few French troops occupied Lorraine. Once there, the AEF could settle down to the task of training its inexperienced soldiers and

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developing itself into a fighting force in the relative calm of a sector 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 to the west of 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 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. Nevertheless, it was perhaps an exaggeration when some of the AEF staff noted that these logistical and economical objectives were at least as important to the Germans as Paris and the channel ports were to the Allies.

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

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 amount of riflemen adequately supported by large numbers of artillery and machine guns.

Rather than mobile units that moved quickly to the battlefield, the AEF's proposed corps and division organizations emphasized staying power for prolonged combat. In a war of masses and protected flanks, the AEF planners believed that success would come with powerful



Above: World War I Helmet, 2d Division, 1917. Below: World War I Enlisted Service Coat, 91st Division.



THE MACHINE GUN

The machine gun quickly became the most important direct-fire infantry weapon of World War I, and its importance only grew. A British infantry division was organized with 18,000 men and 24 heavy machine guns at the beginning of the war. By the end of the war, a division was much smaller in manpower but had 64 heavy and 192 light machine guns down to the platoon level. Though a number of Americans had been closely associated with the development of the machine gun, the U.S. Army had been slow to adopt the new weapon. Combined with the sudden shift from neutrality to mobilization, this policy left the AEF heavily dependent on an assortment of French and British designs to provide the 260 heavy and 768 light machine guns each 28,000-man U.S. infantry division required. By the Armistice, however, a variety of American weapons were entering service, most designed by John M. Browning.



Lewis 1892 Model "Potato Digger" Machine Gun

blows of depth. This depth of attacking forces could be achieved with units of a square organization—corps of four divisions and divisions of four regiments. This square organization would permit the division to attack on a frontage of two brigades with the four regiments in two brigade columns. Similarly, a corps could attack with a phalanx of 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, 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 fifty men for a total strength of 256. Three artillery battalions of seventy-two artillery pieces each would support the division's four regiments of over 12,000 riflemen and fourteen machine-gun companies with 240 heavy machine guns.

The AEF's organizational plan also created modern corps and armies. In the past, the Army's corps and field armies were little more than small headquarters to command their subordinate units. The General Organization Project created an army and several corps that each had headquarters to command, control, and coordinate the increasing large and complex subordinate echelons. The project's field army had a headquarters of about 150 officers and men, while the corps had one of 350 officers and men. Moreover, both echelons of command had a significant amount of their own dedicated combat power outside the attached divisions. Ideally, the corps in the AEF would have a brigade of

heavy artillery and an engineer regiment as well as cavalry, antiaircraft, signal, and support units. The field army had a massive artillery organization of twenty-four regiments as well as large numbers of engineer, military police, and supply units. A corps would have about 19,000 such supporting troops, while an army would have 120,000.

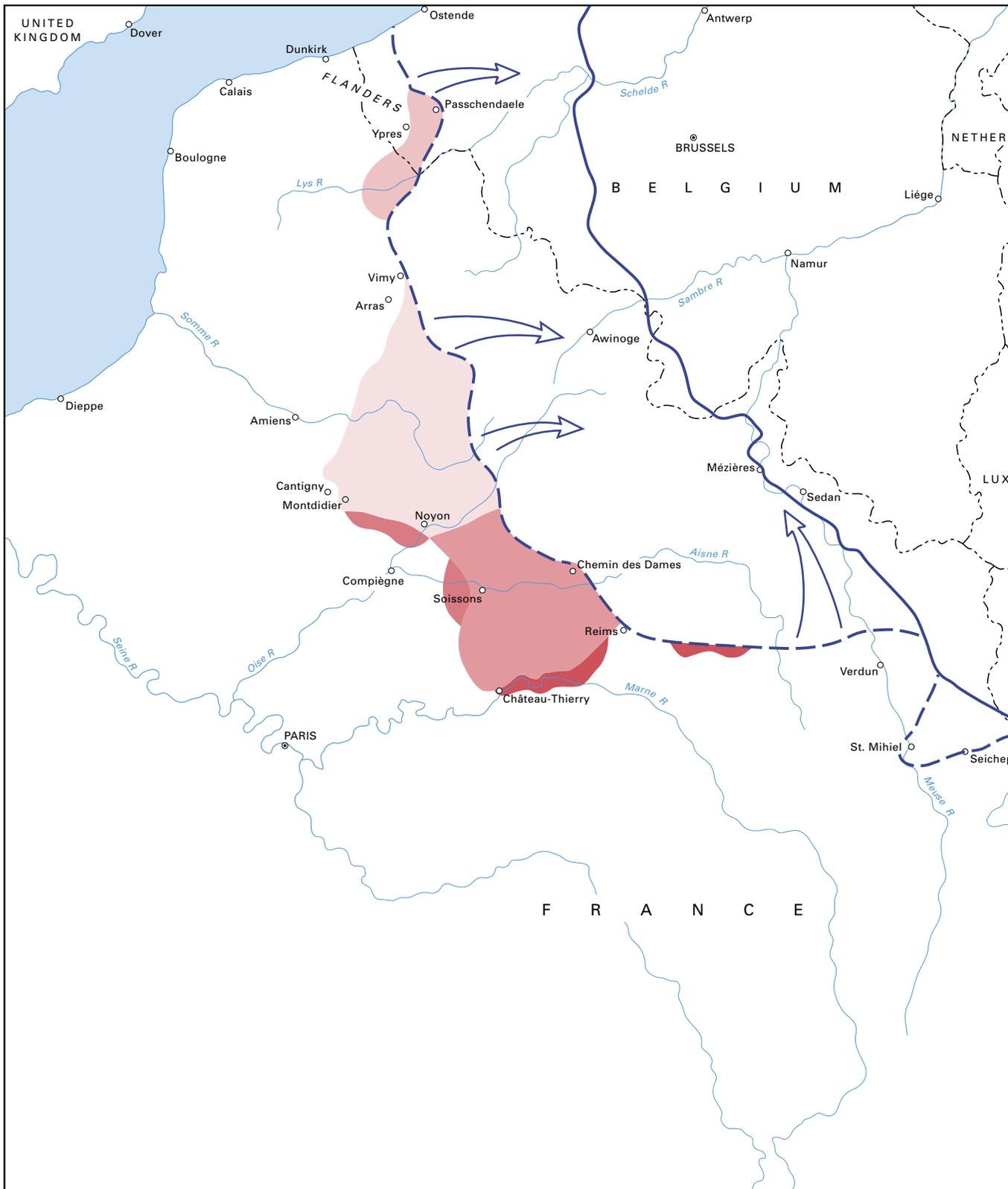
Consistent with the AEF planners' emphasis on sustained combat over a period of time, they also created a system to feed trained replacements into the units at the front. In addition to four attached combat divisions, each corps contained two base divisions organized to coordinate the AEF's replacement system. These divisions would feed replacements to the combat divisions, first from their own ranks and later from replacement battalions sent from the United States. With little need for a full complement of support units, artillery and engineer units would be detached from the replacement divisions and attached to the corps headquarters. The losses from the future American campaigns would fully test this system.

In August the War Department incorporated the AEF's proposed divisional organization in its table of organization. It also approved the six-division corps and the five-corps army.

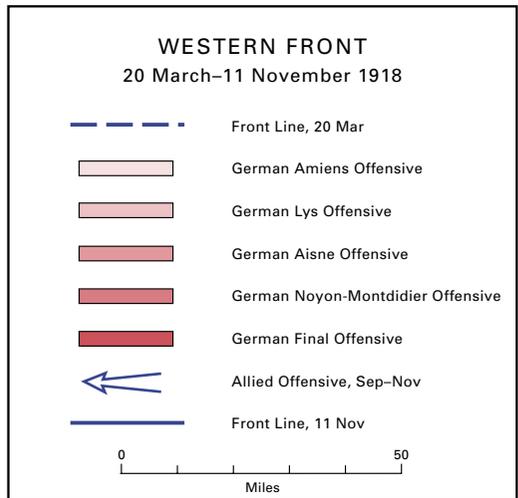
With the AEF's organization settled by the end of August, Pershing only needed to decide where to aim this formidable force when it became ready. In September the AEF's operational staff presented a comprehensive strategic study that outlined the long-range prospects for the war in Europe and laid the groundwork for an American offensive toward Metz in 1919. Although the planners recognized the logistical realities of having the AEF in Lorraine, they based their study on an analysis of the geopolitical situation of late 1917 and their own views of operational theory. The major premise behind the study was Pershing's guiding principle to use the AEF as a separate army in a decisive offensive operation.

The study noted that only the possible collapse of Russia would constitute a significant change in the military situation. Germany could then transfer forces from the Eastern Front and use them to strike a decisive blow on the Italian or Western Front. While the Italian Front offered Germany the best chance for local success, any long-term results would come from successful operations against the French or British armies on the Western Front. Believing that it would be difficult to defeat the British forces, the AEF planners predicted a German spring offensive against the French, probably in the central portion of the Allied line.

On the Allied side, the great losses suffered in 1917 offensives precluded the British and French from undertaking any major offensive in 1918. Nor would the AEF be able to make any serious offensive in 1918: there would not be enough American troops in France until early 1919. Allied activity in 1918, therefore, would have to be restricted to meeting the predicted German offensive and to carrying out limited operations. One of those limited operations, the planners recommended, would be the first employment of the American army—the reduction of the St. Mihiel salient in the spring of 1918. (*See Map 2.*) The Germans had held the salient since the end of 1914, and its reduction would seize key terrain for future advances, free a critical French railroad, and train American units and commanders. Likewise, the British 1918 opera-



Map 2



tions should be made in preparation for the more substantial offensives planned for 1919.

For 1919 the American planners argued for a grand offensive involving concurrent operations along the entire Western Front, preventing the Germans from shuttling forces from one threatened point to another. While the British and French attacked toward vital German communication and economic objectives in the north, the now-ready American ground forces would advance northeast from Lorraine along the Metz-Saarbrücken axis. A 45-mile advance northeast from Nancy would cut the two railroads running from Strasbourg to Metz and to Thionville. Together with the French interdiction of the rail lines to the north of Metz, this action would sever the German armies from the vital resources of Lorraine and the German left wing from the right and would precipitate the Germans to withdraw from some if not all of their lines from Belgium and France. This advance would provide General Pershing with the decisive offensive he desired.

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. Moreover, until the armistice a year later, Pershing's steadfast belief in the envisioned American advance toward Metz would influence his stubborn resistance against American forces' serving under French or British flags and his equally stubborn insistence on the development of an independent American army.

The War Effort in the United States

Despite the efforts of Pershing and his staff to organize the AEF and develop its strategic designs, as they well knew, in the summer of 1917 the U.S. Army was in no position to make its weight felt. In April 1917 the Regular Army had an aggregate strength of 127,588 officers and men; the National Guard could count another 80,446. Together, the total, little over 208,000 men, 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 not a single unit of division 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 the large-scale planning, maneuvering of divisions and corps, and other logistical and administrative knowledge necessary for this new war. The task of managing the Army's necessary expansion into a large, modern force fell largely to Newton Baker, the Secretary of War.

Secretary Baker seemed out of place heading America's war effort. Small and unassuming, he looked more at home on a university campus than in the War Department. A longtime friend of Woodrow Wilson, Baker had been appointed Secretary of War in the spring of 1916, despite his pacifistic attitudes. Although as the mayor of Cleveland he had changed that city's government into an efficient organization, as Secretary of War he would often stay on the 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

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proved an unflappable leader who was flexible enough to force change if he had the correct tools.

In the spring of 1917 Baker did not have the correct tools. The Army's General Staff was a small war-planning agency rather than a coordinating staff for the War Department and its staff 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 when it entered the war in 1914. Once the war broke out many of the talented officers left Washington for overseas or commands, while the staff had 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 on the open market, 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 established 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 very near retirement and distracted by special assignments. Secretary 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's authorization, 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 for actions 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. Forceful and brilliant, March was unafraid of making decisions. At the time of his appointment as Chief of Staff, March had been Pershing's artillery chief in France.

March's overarching goal was to get as many men as possible to Europe and into the AEF to win the war. To achieve this, he wanted to establish effectiveness and efficiency in the General Staff and the War Department. He quickly went about clearing bureaucratic log-jams, 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

emergency. 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. He created 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 a thousand. In the process the General Staff had become an active, not merely a supervisory, operating agency.

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, pigeon-holes, and snarled actions were replaced by centralized control and decentralized operations.

Yet even before General March formed an efficient and effective staff, the War Department had taken steps in the right direction. On May 18, 1917, as Pershing was preparing to sail for Europe, Congress passed the Selective Service Act to raise the necessary manpower for the war. With this act the United States experienced none of the difficulties and inequities with conscription that the Union had during the Civil War: the General Staff had studied those problems and carefully sought to avoid them as it prepared the draft for the legislation. 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 21 and 30 had to register; later the range

THE DRAFT

Having declared war on Germany, Congress in April 1917 was debating what would become the Selective Service Act. In the Office of the Judge Advocate General, Capt. Hugh S. Johnson learned that registration of draft-eligible men could not begin for a month after the act's passage: it would take that long to print the 30 million registration forms. Fearing the possible consequences of the delay, Johnson risked court-martial by illegally ordering the forms printed in advance.

The act was passed on May 18, and the registration process began on June 5. At some 4,000 local draft boards, registrants were issued numbers that would determine the order in which they were called into military service. In Washington, on July 21 Secretary Baker held the First Draft, randomly choosing numbers that corresponded to those the draft boards had issued. A Second Draft on June 27, 1918, applied to men who had turned twenty-one since the First Draft and thus were eligible to be drafted. The draft brought more than 2.7 million men to the colors during the war.



Secretary Baker chooses the first number for the Second Draft.

included males from 18 to 45. 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 local boards composed of local citizens; these local civilians 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 3.7 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 Pershing's forces became more actively involved in the war, much of these identities disappeared as new soldiers were absorbed into units of all three elements. By mid-1918 the War Department changed the designation of all land forces to one "United States Army." Nevertheless, the three components continued to manifest themselves in the numerical designations. For example, the Regular Army divisions were numbered from 1 to 25. Numbers 26 through 75 were reserved for the National Guard and higher numbers for divisions of the National Army.

Just how large 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 1 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 30 divisions with supporting services—almost 1.4 million men—to Europe by 1919. As the Germans launched their spring offensives and the AEF began more active operations, Pershing increased his estimates. In June 1918 he would ask for 3 million men with 66 divisions in France by May 1919. He quickly raised this estimate to 80 divisions by April 1919, followed shortly (under pressure from the Allies) by a request for 100 divisions by July of the same year. Although the War Department questioned whether 100 divisions could be sent to France by mid-1919 and even whether that many would be needed, it produced plans to raise 98 divisions, with 80 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 30 to 52. In the end the Army actually would form 62 divisions, of which 43 were sent overseas. Consequently, when the war ended in November 1918 the Army was running close to its projected goal of 52 divisions in France by 1919.

To train these divisions the Army would eventually establish thirty-two camps or cantonments 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, e.g., riflemen, artillery gunners, supply or

THE PLATTSBURG MOVEMENT

After the defeat of a Universal Military Training Program, during the summer of 1913 Army Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood created two military training camps for college students. The program, reflecting Progressive-era social theory, expanded and developed into a popular movement promoting health and the social benefits of military training, citizenship responsibilities, and national unity. By 1916 the movement included a businessman's training course at Plattsburg, New York, a camp that lent its name to the movement. Attendees, 16,000 in 1916 alone, paid out of their own pockets to receive the equivalent of four months' military instruction in a few short weeks. The camps and their graduates became valuable resources in the World War I mobilization effort, when the camps became officer candidate schools and many of their alumni entered uniformed service.

personnel clerks, or medical specialists. Division commanders at the cantonments would train their men progressively from individual to battalion level but only within each battalion's specialty fields. Within the four-month period, the War Department policy gave the divisional commanders latitude to vary the content and duration of the specialty training. 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, with the entire training period dedicated to the development of individual and small-unit skills, the larger units never came 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 regime and to move away from the sole 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 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 training 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, General March was able to establish several centers to train infantry, artillery, and machine-gun replacements in April 1918. Though the Army continued to make progress on creating a viable program, the press from replacements overwhelmed the nascent system; again, it was left up to the deployed forces to deal with the problem.

The mobilization of manpower and the training of that manpower had been the major concern of a century of American military thought; but in World War I, the demands of arming, equipping, and supplying a 3-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 industry standards for the production of ordnance. Soon, however, it became apparent that the enormous materiel requirements of war would need careful management; thus the Munitions Standards Board grew in stages to become the War Industries Board. With both civilian and military representatives, the board had broad powers to coordinate all purchasing by the Army and Navy, to establish production priorities, to create new plants and convert existing plants 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.

The Army's representative on the War Industries Board, Brig. Gen. Hugh Johnson, would later use his experiences with industrial coordination as the head of the New Deal's National Recovery Administration in the 1930s. 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. To secure the Army's industrial and transportation requirements, Goethals and Johnson coordinated with one of the civilian boards for the appropriate allotments of available resources and services.

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 of American manufacture 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 operations of the AEF's Tank Corps; in some instances British and French tank battalions supported U.S. troops.

American industry had better success with the 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 and could step up production. Three private companies were producing the Lee-Enfield rifle for the British; when they completed their contract, they began turning out Enfields modified for American ammunition. Since 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 (BAR); these weapons were the 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 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 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 several base sections built around 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, whence 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, like 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 five sections: G-1 (Personnel), G-2 (Intelligence), G-3 (Operations), G-4 (Supply), and G-5 (Training). 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 increasingly act and speak for Pershing without waiting for his personal approval. This practice would sometime 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. In addition, a great majority of the division, corps, and army chiefs of staff had been educated at Leavenworth. 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 massive movement of American troops.

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 map 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 in Lorraine. 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. His training staff outlined an extensive regime for the incoming divisions, divided into three phases: The first phase emphasized basic soldier skills and unit training at platoon, company, and battalion levels; the second phase had battalions join French regiments in a quiet sector to gain front-line experience; in the third phase, the division's infantry and artillery would join 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 of the New England National Guard; and the 42d Division, called the Rainbow Division because it was a composite of guardsmen from many states. As with the 1st Division, many of these divisions' 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.

For training in trench warfare, Pershing gratefully accepted the help of experienced Allied, especially French, instructors. For its training,

The officers' common Leavenworth experience ... permitted the AEF staff to speak the same language and to approach strategic and tactical situations in a similar manner.

GAS IN WORLD WAR I

The Western Front had seen extensive chemical operations since April 1915; but in mid-July 1917, 12,000 newly arrived U.S. soldiers found themselves stationed within thirty miles of the front without gas masks. The United States entered World War I with its troops essentially unprepared for chemical warfare, which had to be remedied before the AEF could add its combat power to that of the Allies. 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 U.S. forces devoted substantial resources to defensive and offensive chemical warfare. The Army eventually established a separate Chemical Warfare Service to coordinate the offensive, defensive, and supply problems involved. Gas inflicted over a quarter of all AEF casualties: one of each U.S. division's four field hospitals had to be dedicated to treatment of gas injuries.



Typical World War I Gas Mask

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 the hand grenade and the mortar. Pershing, however, believed that the French and British had become too imbued with trench warfare to the exclusion of the open warfare. Since Pershing strongly held that the 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 detailed work in rifle marksmanship and use of the bayonet.

Ideally, the divisions would go through their training cycle in three or four months. Unfortunately, the situation was rarely ideal. Soldiers and units arrived from the United States without many basic skills or training. Also, the regimental and divisional officers and men were too often sent away from their units to attend schools or perform labor details. Moreover, due to the German offensives in the spring 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 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. With a loss of 3 men, the Germans captured 11 Americans and killed 3: 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. 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. In Russia, the Bolshevik Revolution ended the war on the Eastern Front in October. Using forces freed from the Eastern Front, the Germans spearheaded an Austro-German offensive against the Italians along the Isonzo River in late October. By November the Italians had been defeated and thrown back over sixty miles. What had been a three-front war for the Germans in the spring of 1917 was now essentially a single front. The Germans 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 Lloyd George approached “Colonel” Edward House, President Wilson’s close adviser, on the possibility of American companies’ training and fighting, if necessary, 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 additional agreements to have the four American divisions then in France to 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.



*Gas Masks for Man and Horse
ca. 1917–1918*

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, neither he nor his staff shared the Allied pessimism of the threat. Pershing's operational staff believed that the British and French could withstand the potential German offensive and that neither was at the brink of collapse. Moreover, Pershing steadfastly held to his objective of an independent American Army. Although he personally believed strongly in such a force, he was also following 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 would provide a bulk of the Allied forces, a bulk not to be used under foreign flags. To Secretary Baker Pershing explained 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. For the time being, the debate over amalgamation had subsided.

As the Allies debated, the German high command planned a series of spring offensives to end the war. With the collapse of Russia and the victory at Caporetto over the Italians, Germany was able to achieve numerical superiority on the Western Front. Strategically, however, Germany's 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 overcame the battlefield advantages. With new tactics for massing artillery and infiltrating infantry through weaknesses in 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 March 21, 1918, the first German blow 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 in German hands would effectively split the French and British armies. (*See Map 2.*) British forces rallied to prevent the capture of Amiens, and by the end of March the German offensive had bogged down. The Germans nevertheless had achieved a brilliant tacti-

HUTIER TACTICS

Named for General Oskar von Hutier, German Eighth Army commander on the Eastern Front in 1917, Hutier Tactics employed rolling and box artillery barrages to enable infantry to bypass strong points and penetrate enemy positions deeply enough to envelop adjacent Russian defenses. Their greatest success occurred during the 1917 German capture of Riga; and this success at the operational level brought the favorable notice of the General Staff and Chief of Staff, as well as General Erich von Ludendorff's decision to employ them with storm troops during the spring 1918 Western Front offensive. Germany began developing infantry storm-troop units and tactics on the Western Front as early as 1915, as maneuver there stagnated. The General Staff supported developing special units, tactics, and weapons to enable local penetrations of enemy weak points to permit envelopment of bypassed enemy forces and strong points.

cal 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 March 25 Pershing offered General Petain any AEF division that could be of service and postponed the idea of fielding American divisions under the American I Corps. Appreciating the offer, Petain preferred for the Americans to replace French divisions in quiet sectors, freeing the more experienced French divisions for action against the Germans. Field Marshal Haig specifically asked Pershing for any 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 to the attack. 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 orchestrate the other strong-willed Allied commanders, including General Pershing.

In April the Germans launched another attack on the British lines. This time the attack was 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. (*See Map 2.*)

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 stubbornly refused. Over the next few weeks, in a series of confused and often contradicting negotiations in London, Washington, and France, the Allies and the Americans bickered over American manpower. At the end of April Pershing and Lord Alfred Milner, the new British War Minister, agreed 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 amalga-

mation. 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?" The American 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 1918 and 150,000 in June. American shipping would be used to ship artillery, engineer, 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 April 20 the quiet erupted with a heavy German bombardment followed by a regiment-size German attack to seize the village of Seicheprey. Boxing in the defenders with artillery, the German attackers overwhelmed two American companies and seized the trench line. The American 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 would raise questions about the American ability to handle divisions—or higher units. Much more satisfying to Pershing and the American leadership was the 1st Division's attack at Cantigny.

In mid-April the 1st Division went north in response to the German Lys offensive. Petain had selected its sector near Montdidier, along the line 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 for an offensive mission. Finally, Petain himself agreed that Bullard's men should attack to seize the village of Cantigny on commanding ground near the tip of the salient. Even after careful preparations and rehearsals, the regiment-size American attack was not a sure thing; twice before, the French had taken and lost the key piece of terrain.

On the morning of May 28 Col. Hanson Ely's 28th Regiment, well supported by American and French artillery and by French tanks, took the village in a well-executed assault. The difficulty came in holding the town against German counterattacks. To help deal with the enemy attacks, the Americans could rely only on their own organic artillery after the supporting French guns withdrew to deal with another large German offensive. The American gunners, however, proved up to the task and assisted in breaking up several actual or potential counterat-



An anti-aircraft machine gun of the 101st Field Artillery fires on a German observation plane at Plateau Chemin des Dames, France, in March 1918.

tacks. When the German counterattacks came, they were poorly coordinated with their own artillery; Ely's men repulsed them. Altogether, the Americans would repulse six counterattacks. After three days of counterattacks and constant artillery shelling, Ely and his regiment were replaced by the 18th Regiment. During their efforts in taking and holding Cantigny, the Americans lost almost 200 men killed and suffered another 800 casualties. Yet for the Americans, this local operation was only the first step.

Americans Help Stem the Tide, May–July 1918

To bleed off reserves from the north, on May 27 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 the reserves in the north, Foch and Petain struggled to scrape up enough reserves to form a new line. To the west, the American 1st Division extended its lines to free a French division for redeployment. Moreover, two large American divisions (Maj. Gen. Omar Bundy's 2d Division and Maj. Gen. Joseph T. Dickman's 3d Division) entered the line near Château-Thierry on the Marne. Of the five American divisions almost ready for battle, Bundy's and Dickman's were closest to the path of the Germans. On May 30 they had been ordered forward to feed into the French line 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 site over the river on May 31. The next day Dickman's infantry arrived. For the next week, the division repulsed the



Army Camp, George Harding, 1917

limited German attacks in its sector. On June 6 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 June 1 Bundy's 2d Division had 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 position.

Once the German advance was stopped, the 2d Division was ordered to seize Belleau Wood and the villages of Bouresches and Vaux to the east. The attack began on June 6. Over the next month the infantrymen and marines fought a bloody, toe-to-toe fight against four German divisions. The struggle for Belleau Wood was particularly hard fought. The fight became a test of wills, with the Germans checking the mettle

of the Americans. By June 17 the marines had taken Bouresches. Six days later they cleared Belleau Wood, and on July 1 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 battle.

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 June 13 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 July 15 one German army attacked south from positions east of Reims while another attacked southeast from the Marne salient. Again, the Allies were tipped off about the attack and sent a counterbarrage against the Germans. Moreover, the allied forces, including the U.S. 42d Division and the three 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.



Officers of the "Buffalos," 367th Infantry, 92d Division, in France, ca. 1918

In front of the German attack against the Marne, the French commanders did not want to allow the enemy a foothold over the river and maintained the forward positions. The Germans thus were able to make greater headway, up to five miles beyond the Marne at some points. On the eastern flank of the French line, however, the U.S. 3d Division prevented the Germans from crossing the Marne. Dickman's men had been in the area since early June. Initially, Dickman had deployed them in depth with two regiments forward and two in reserve. But since the division was required to defend a lot of ground, he had to spread the defenses more thinly across the front. 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 beyond that.

On the early morning hours of July 15 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 had stopped the Germans. 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 German attack against the 3d Division had been stopped. 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 July 15.

The AEF's combat along the Marne carried an unfortunate note. Four rifle companies of the 28th Division from the Pennsylvania National Guard had been attached to the French division to the east of the

ROCK OF THE MARNE

On July 15, 1918, the 38th Infantry of the 3d Infantry Division successfully defended its position on the Paris-Metz railroad, 200 yards from the River Marne, against six German attacks. It was the last great offensive of the German Army and the first fight of the 38th Infantry in World War I. Initially, the Germans succeeded in driving a wedge 4,000 yards deep into the 38th Infantry's front while the U.S. 30th Infantry on its left and the French 125th Division on its right withdrew under heavy pressure. With the situation desperate, the regiment stood and fought. The two flanks of the 38th Infantry moved toward the river, squeezing the German spearhead between them and exposing it to heavy shelling by the 3d Division artillery. The German Army's offensive failed. With this brave stand the 38th Infantry earned its *nom de guerre* Rock of the Marne. General John J. Pershing declared its stand "one of the most brilliant pages in our military annals."

38th Infantry. When the French retreated, they neglected to inform the Pennsylvanians; the riflemen became surrounded. Most of them were killed or captured; only a few fought their way to the south. By the time the survivors made it back to friendly lines, they found their division in line against the Germans.

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, especially the British, had begun to pay dividends; American troops began to pour into Europe. At the end of June over 900,000 Americans had arrived in France, with 10,000 arriving daily.

In early July the AEF had reached the million-man mark, with twenty-three combat divisions (an 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; four were in reserve positions. The 4th Division joined those in reserve. 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 with 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, he 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 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 the late spring the III and IV Corps were formed to manage Americans unit-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

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.

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 Petain 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 May 27. The available U.S. divisions were sent northward to help stem the tide along the Marne.

By June the better part of five American divisions was positioned in the Château-Thierry area. Forgoing the Toul sector for the time being, Pershing decided to use this concentration of American divisions for the first tactical employment of an AEF corps. In mid-June, with General Petain's permission, the AEF's GHQ notified General Liggett and his I Corps to prepare to move to the Château-Thierry region. As the I Corps prepared to move north, the AEF made an important shift in its doctrine for the employment of corps. Initially, the GHQ had followed the policy of assigning 6 divisions (4 combat, 1 base, and 1 depot divisions) permanently to each corps headquarters. The reaction to the German offensives, however, meant that the corps' assigned divisions were strewn individually over the recent battle zones. With the AEF corps' divisions scattered, it seemed unlikely that it would be in position to take tactical control of the divisions. Consequently, the AEF announced that divisions and special troops would be assigned temporarily to the corps. Organically, the corps itself would consist of only a headquarters and some artillery, aviation, engineer, and technical units. The change also reflected the French system for 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 June 21. 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 the American Independence Day, July 4, 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: the salient was inherently weak as the German forces relied on a single railroad through Soissons for the majority of their supplies. The Germans had failed to improve the situation with their June offensive. In mid-June Foch

directed Petain to begin making plans for an attack against Soissons; Petain and his commanders completed the plans by the end of June. After French intelligence had warned him of the German attack east of Chateau-Thierry that would begin on July 15, Foch set the date for his counterattack as the eighteenth. Consequently, as the Germans were attacking on the eastern flank of the salient, the Allies would be attacking against their exposed western flank.

The Allied attack plan called for two French armies to attack on July 18 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



Storming Machine Gun, *George Harding, 1918*

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. In addition to the two U.S. divisions with the Tenth Army, 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 July 18 the Franco-American attack came as a tactical and operational surprise to the Germans. To preserve secrecy the Allies had made no artillery preparation of any kind prior to the attack. Instead the infantry attack was supported by over 550 tanks; short but intensive preparatory fires preceded a rolling barrage. Moreover, many of the assault units had moved into attack positions during the night before the attack. Darkness, heavy rain, and mud hampered the American divisions' movements to the front; and some of the 2d Division's infantry reached their jump-off point with only minutes to spare.

Spearheading the 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 Moroccan 1st Division in the center. On July 18 both American divisions made remarkable progress, advancing over three miles and achieving their objectives by 8:00 A.M. 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 sixty-six 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 seventy guns from the seven 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 Allied 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 allied interdiction of the supply line through Soissons made the Marne salient untenable and the Germans began to withdraw.

To the south of the Tenth Army, the Sixth Army also attacked on July 18. Among the attacking units was Maj. Gen. George H. Cameron's 4th Division, which supported the French II and VII Corps. From July 18–20 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 Di-



Pulling Caisson Uphill, *George Harding, 1918*

vision and the French 167th Division, I Corps pushed beyond the old Belleau Wood battlegrounds and advanced about ten miles from July 18–25. For the next three weeks the corps made steady gains against the tenacious German defenders. Advancing with the 42d Division from July 25–August 3 and then the 4th Division from August 3–12, the American corps crossed the Ourcq and then the Vesle, a distance of almost fifteen miles. On August 12 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 July 20, 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 July 29. The 32d Division continued the advance until it reached the Vesle. On August 1 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 elimi-

nated 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. With the initiative passing to the Allies, so too passed the chance for Germany to defeat Britain and France before the United States could intervene in force.

To maintain pressure on the Germans, Foch had Petain continue the advance beyond the Vesle. From mid-August to mid-September this advance included troops from the American III Corps before they withdrew southward to join the new American First Army. From August 28–September 1 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 September 16.

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 July 21 he approached Petain 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. Petain 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 immediate 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 the American First Army, with an effective date of August 10, 1918. When on August 4 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 August 8 the two corps held a front of eight miles and had control of six American and two French divisions. Petain's headquarters issued orders affecting the relief of the Sixth Army by the American First. On August 10 Pershing achieved one of his major objectives for the AEF, the formation of an independent American army that combined American corps and American divisions.

These arrangements were quickly overtaken by events. By the time Petain and Pershing could establish a sector for an American army, the situation along the Vesle had stabilized. With no need or desire to occu-

py an inactive sector, Pershing arranged with Petain to begin moving his army headquarters southward to prepare for operations against the St. Mihiel salient. Leaving Petain 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 August 30. 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 July 24 conference. But now, several weeks later, Foch had reconsidered the need for the St. Mihiel operation. Based on a suggestion from Field 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 Petain for assistance. Petain 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, Petain and Pershing met with Foch on September 2. Supported by Petain, Pershing offered to assume the entire sector of the front from Pont-à-Mousson through the Meuse valley 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 September 10 and the larger offensive along the west bank of the Meuse starting between September 20–25.

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 tens of meters deep combined with trenches and machine guns to make the Western Front essentially impassible to large bodies of troops. A substantial fraction of artillery rounds were spent for the sole purpose of cutting the wire in front of attacking infantry. 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.

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 fourteen miles into the Allied lines between the Moselle and Meuse rivers. Bounded by Pont-à-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 of the salient, the three divisions of the newly formed V Corps would attack southeasterly toward Vigneulles. General Cameron, who had impressed Pershing in the July operations, commanded the corps. Cameron's men would link up with the three divisions of the IV Corps, now under General Dickman who had fought so well along the Marne. To the right, the experienced I Corps of four divisions would push to the base of the salient. The I and IV Corps were to attack at 5:00 A.M., the French corps an hour later, and the V Corps at 8:00.

Pershing was determined not to fail in his first operation as an army commander. To support his 11 divisions (7 American and 4 French), 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 Petain, developed an elaborate scheme to deceive the Germans into thinking that the American 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 1:00 on the morning of September 12 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 8:00, 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 September 8 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 September 12 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 2:30 on the morning of the thirteenth. 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 September 13 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 cannon 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 had given 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 complex operation along the Meuse.

The Meuse-Argonne Campaign, September–November 1918

Though local operations to improve the defensive positions and aggressive patrolling continued along 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 now executed a complex and massive movement of troops, artillery, and supplies to its new battleground. This movement was completed over only three roads capable of heavy traffic and confined to the hours of darkness to maintain secrecy. Over 820,000 men were transferred in the region: 220,000 French and Italian troops left the area, and about 600,000 Americans entered. Of the 15 American divisions that took over the sector, 7 had been involved in the St. Mihiel operation, 3 came from the Vesle sector, 3 from the area of Soissons, 1 near Bar-le-Duc, and 1 from a training area. That this movement went off without a serious setback was largely attributable to the careful planning of a young staff officer on Pershing's First Army staff, Col. George C. Marshall.

The AEF's attack into the Meuse-Argonne region was part of Foch's larger general offensive against the Germans. Together with the con-

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Marshall

GEORGE C. MARSHALL, JR. (1880–1959)

Col. George C. Marshall, Jr., made his reputation during World War I while serving as operations officer for the U.S. First Army. Marshal Ferdinand Foch insisted that the First Army break off its long-planned attack south and west of Verdun on the St. Mihiel salient and instead attack north through the Argonne Forest. Marshall directed the team that planned the shift in the axis of attack and then successfully supervised the movement of 600,000 troops, 3,000 guns, and 40,000 tons of supplies to the new sector in ten days. The American attack commenced on schedule, due in no small measure to Marshall's planning expertise.

centric attacks of the British toward Mons and the Americans toward Mézières, the French would attack in the center, as well as supporting both of their allies in their operations. This broad-front campaign 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 forty-two were the big divisions of the AEF.

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, and Metz. That objective was about thirty miles from the jump-off line east 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.

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 region's rugged terrain. The high ground on either flank gave them excellent observation points from which to rain artillery on the American advance. 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 German defensive system was about fifteen miles deep with five divisions on line and another seven in immediate reserve. Petain believed that the German 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. These were divided among the three attacking corps: Bullard's III Corps on the east, Cameron's V Corps in the center, and Liggett's I Corps on the west. The American infantrymen were supported by 2,700 pieces of artillery, 189 tanks, and 821 aircraft.

Pershing and his staff envisioned the offensive in two stages. During the first stage U.S. forces would penetrate the third German line, advancing about ten miles and clearing the Argonne Forest to link up with the French Fourth Army at Grandpré. The second stage would consist of a further 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 were planned to clear the heights along the east bank of the Meuse.

The first attacks would kick off on September 26. Initially, 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 its flanks, the I and III Corps would advance to protect both the army's and the V Corps' flanks. In addition, their corps artillery was charged with suppressing the German artillery on the flanks. Pershing wanted to seize Cunel and, to its west, Romagne, by the end of the second day.

At 5:30 A.M., after a three-hour artillery bombardment, the three corps launched their attacks in the Meuse-Argonne. 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 September 27–28 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

CODE TALKERS

As a means to secure radio communications, the U.S. Army in World War I used Choctaw Indians with their unique language to rapidly and securely transmit information across the airwaves. This experiment was a success, and the Army would later turn to several tribes of American Indians in World War II (Comanche and Sioux among others) to use their native tongues in that conflict. Although often overshadowed by the more celebrated Navajo code talkers of the U.S. Marine Corps, the Choctaws of the U.S. Army pioneered the code-talker concept in World War I.

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.

Nor were all the First Army's difficulties from the enemy or 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 since 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 5:30 A.M. on October 4 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 gained 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 October 6 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 October 7, 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 the tenth, 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. With the French Fourth Army on the First Army's western flank, the 2d Division (now commanded by Maj. Gen. John A. Lejeune of the Marine Corps) captured Mont Blanc Ridge, which provided the only natural defensive line south of the Aisne River, in a hard-fought battle from October 2–4. On October 10 the 36th Division relieved the 2d Division and advanced to the Aisne River by the thirteenth. The advance to the Aisne River brought the French Fourth Army on line with the American First Army.

On October 8 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 October 14 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 October 16. 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.

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

SGT. ALVIN C. YORK (1887–1964)

On October 8 some doughboys of the 82d Infantry Division (“All American”) were attacking westward into the Argonne Forest to outflank the 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. Shortly after, German machine guns and rifles opened on the doughboys, wounding over half the patrol. York single-handedly silenced the German fire, killing around twenty of the enemy in the process. York and the remainder of the patrol led 132 prisoners back to American lines.



Sergeant York

Army had become unwieldy, with over a million men along an 83-mile front.

On October 12 Pershing organized the 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 October 16 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 army’s 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 infantry objectives and to conduct counterbattery fires against German artillery. In his commanders Liggett instilled 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 attacks involved heavy and hard fighting, but the bloodiest of the local operations was the I Corps’

ten-day battle to capture Grandpré, which fell on the twenty-seventh. 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 November 1 Liggett's First Army attacked north, toward the Meuse River. The main objective was the Barricourt Ridge in the center, a realistic advance of five miles. Only once the ridgeline was secured would the army thrust west to maneuver around the Bourgogne Forest, link up with the French Fourth Army, then thrust northeast to drive to Sedan and the Meuse River. 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 make much progress. 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 artillery and supplies forward. At one point the advance was so rapid that it ran off the AEF headquarters' maps. By November 4 the First Army had elements along the heights overlooking the Meuse and brought the railroad from Sedan to Mézières under artillery fire. 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 increasingly smaller ones, this attack was different: the advance on the third day exceeded those 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 Armistice was signed. The fighting ended at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month—November 11, 1918.

When it ended, 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.

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 1 million American soldiers in 29 divisions saw active operations. The AEF lost over 320,000 casualties, of which 50,280 were killed and another 200,600 were wounded in action. In October the Americans held over 101 miles, or 23 percent, of the Western Front;

Improved staff work and coordination afforded the First Army the flexibility to bypass German defenses.

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 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 Petain himself often intervened on behalf of Pershing and the AEF to establish the independent American army fighting on his own sector of the front. More than other Allied leaders, Petain seemed to understand what the AEF meant to the Allied cause.

More than its achievements on the battlefield, the 2-million-man AEF helped the Allied cause by its mere presence. Throughout 1918, while Germany grew progressively weaker, the Allied military strength grew 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 Allied side.

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. Within the span of several months, the best American divisions showed considerable tactical skill in their battles in October and November 1918. Leaders like Hunter Liggett and John 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 fields and forests of France. World War II battles were planned and coordinated by staffs 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. Like the AEF the American armies of 1944 were built around 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 was seemingly ready to assume its place in the world as one of the great armies of a great power.

The French and British helped train and transport the American soldiers and supplied much of the artillery, tanks, and airplanes for the AEF.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways was America prepared or unprepared for war in 1917? How successfully did the U.S. Army overcome its initial problems?
2. How much strategic or operational flexibility did the American Army have when the United States entered the war?
3. Why did Pershing disagree with the concept of amalgamation? Was he correct? Discuss the viewpoints of the French and the British.
4. What role did the U.S. Army play in the operations of the Aisne-Marne and St. Mihiel? Why were these operations important to the Army's development?
5. What did the Army learn from the Meuse-Argonne Campaign? What should it have learned?
6. How did World War I change the Army?

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