

## *World War 1: America's Role on the Western Front*



### HEROES OF THE MEUSE-ARGONNE

From an official army photograph. Soldiers of the First Division A. E. F., near the Meuse River, November 9, 1918. This division had twice been in line during the Meuse-Argonne battle, besides taking part in previous battles.

Ellen Resnek  
Lesson Plan  
FPRI America's Entry into World War I:  
A History Institute for Teachers  
April 9-10, 2016  
First Division Museum at Cantigny

In this lesson, students will examine the American Strategy of the Great War, including battle strategies on the Western Front. Students will additionally analyze other causes for the German collapse that led to the end of the war and an eventual but fragile peace.

**Standards:**

NCSS objective #3: IV – Individual Development & Identity e) – examine the interactions of ethnic, national, or cultural influences in specific situations or events...

NCSS objective #5: VII – Production, Distribution, & Consumption h) – apply economic concepts and reasoning when evaluating historical and contemporary social developments and issues.

**Overview:**

WWI remains one of the bloodiest and most destructive wars ever. Its global impact on humanity was devastating. The allied and central powers leading the battles -- Germany, France, and Britain - did not make any great gains, despite their efforts to advance their positions, and suffered and inflicted extraordinary casualties. The Battle of Verdun, for example, lasted nine months. The French casualties amounted to about 400,000, German ones to about 350,000; some 300,000 were killed. Thanks in large part to assistance from the United States, the allies were able to stop a German assault on the Western Front. Consequently, German support for the war dissolved and a cease-fire was put into effect in November 1918. The entry of the United States into the war in 1917 was key to Germany's military collapse and the end of the military stalemate. President Woodrow Wilson campaigned in 1916 on the slogan "he kept us out of war," Wilson narrowly won re-election. However, a series of events, including German submarines attacking U.S. targets, pushed Wilson to ask for a declaration of war from Congress. By 1918, 4,355,000 Americans were in uniform.

**Rationale:**

Students taking Western Civilizations should be able to understand the underlining causes of WWI and the affects this period of history had on the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and America's global posture. Understanding this period of time is necessary in order to appreciate the events that led to WWII and the beginning of significant domestic changes in regards to women and minority roles in American society.

**Teacher Background:** Butcher History Institute <http://www.fpri.org/multimedia/2016/04/u-s-role->

western-front/

The U.S. Role on the Western Front

Jennifer Keene

The third presentation at the Teaching Military History Institute entitled “America’s Entry into World War I.” This History Institute was sponsored by FPRI’s Madeleine and W.W. Keen Butcher History Institute, the First Division Museum at Cantigny (a division of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation), Carthage College, and FPRI’s Center for the Study of America and the West. These remarks were made at the First Division Museum at Cantigny in Wheaton, IL, on April 9, 2016.

### **Curriculum Frameworks**

Analyze the causes and course of America’s growing role in world affairs during World War I.

### **Lesson Objectives**

As a result of completing these activities, students will:

- Describe several of the WWI's bloodiest battles.
- Track the battles' progression to determine advances made by leading nations.
- Create an Infographic of one or more of the battles.
- Understand why the United States entered the World War I.
- Brainstorm what led to the German collapse on the front.
- Examine the basic components/factors of the collapse.
- Review arguments for the factors contributing to the end of the war.

### **Big Idea:**

*Part 1: Lesson: Review Historical Details*

### **Procedure: Scavenger Hunt (Individual)**

#### ***Time Line: Review Events Timeline of American Entry into WWI***

- The students will identify the event and place it in a chronological order on their hunt sheet.
- We will then review the answers as a whole class.

### **Assessment**

- Level of participation

### **Extension/Modification:**

Students can research additional events on the time line and create a visual time line linking key events.

## Part 2: Lesson Overview of United States Entry into World War I

### Procedure:

#### Overview and Connections:

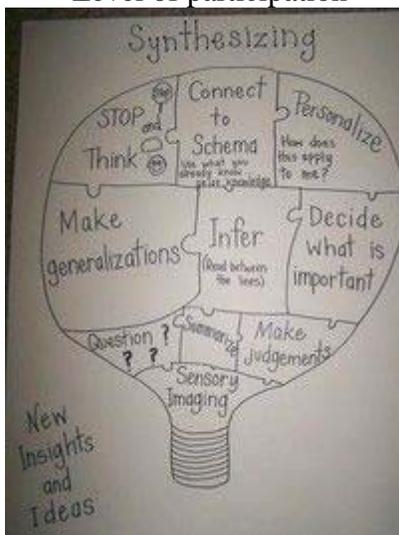
- The students will read the overview
- Students will then focus on the concluding paragraph:

*There is much still to be learned from World War I, because the issues that emerged early in the 20th century have not gone away. The Great War showed how deep nationalist feelings can be and how these can escalate when people sharing a certain kinship feel threatened by another labeled "the enemy." The conflicts that triggered World War I were relatively minor at first, but the war itself turned these into issues of great magnitude. The lessons of World War I still must be studied so that its tragic history will never be repeated.*

- Students practice their skills of summary and synthesis
- Students will journal 3 issues that emerged in WW1 that have not gone away.
- We will then share their connections with the class

### Assessment

- Level of participation



#### Summarize & Synthesize Strategies Explained...

Summarizing is what good readers do to highlight the important information they read. Students sometimes struggle when summarizing because they want to recall every little detail they can remember. When you summarize, you pick out the most important things that you just read and write it or tell it in just a few sentences.

Synthesize is the development of what we're reading...as we read it. As we read, an original thought takes shape, and then it expands or changes as we read new information. Essentially it is "Combining new ideas with what I already read to get something new and different." As students read, their thinking should change depending on new information.

#### Summarize:

Ask basic questions: Who? Did What? Keep it short!

Tell what is important, in a way that makes sense, and don't tell too much!

Look at the newspaper Headlines; these are "summaries" of the article – discuss what the article might be about...or...read the article first, then decide what headline might fit!

Have students write "Sticky Note Summaries" - where they write a sentence on a sticky after each page or chapter. Then those can be put together to summarize the entire book!

Synthesize:

Help students think of reading as a “puzzle” that must all fit together

As they read, use these phrases to synthesize the information:

- I have learned that...
- Now I understand that...
- This gives me an idea...
- That leads me to believe...
- Now this changes everything...
- and so on!

Think of it like a stone rippling in the water...One thought starts another, then another!

**Extension/Modification**

Students can work in small groups to journal the assignment. The groups can share out their synthesis work in a jigsaw activity.

### ***Part 3: Lesson: Exploring the Major Battles of WWI***

#### **Procedure:**

#### **Western Civilizations**

#### **America's Entry into WW1: Piktochart**

**Students** will be assigned a specific battle from WW1. They will then use the information to create an infographic using "Piktochart" to present your knowledge to the essential question below:

#### **Essential Question:**

Analyze the underlining causes of WWI and the affects this period of history had on the early 20<sup>th</sup> century including the United States role in Foreign Affairs.

#### **The Infographic must contain the following:**

- The essential question
- Key information on your topic (you will be given a separate handout for this)
- Charts, graphs, visuals, shapes, etc.
- Primary source:
  - One visual (i.e. art, painting, cartoon, map, picture)
  - One document (a quote or excerpt)
- CONCRETE details: specific examples from the text/reading to support your visual information.
  - *Check the list of vocabulary. Any ID's that fall within your category must be in your infographic.*
- A summary response to the essential question that ties together all your visuals/information from the sub-topics.
- ***You will present this information to the class!***

**What is an Infographic?** According to Wikipedia, information graphics or infographics are graphic visual representations of information, data, or knowledge intended to present complex information quickly and clearly.

**What is Piktochart?** The Piktochart site is a free website that helps you easily create infographics by using themes and templates. All you have to do is create an account, then start creating!

#### **How to create and print your infographic using [www.piktochart.com](http://www.piktochart.com):**

- Go to the website and navigate to <http://support.piktochart.com/hc/en-us>. Here they can click on several links that will show them how to create your infographic using themes, templates, and customization tools.
- Save the infographic as an image (.jpeg) file.
- Copy and paste the image into a blank Word document and resize it as large as you can without exceeding the printable margins of your paper.
- Print your document (IN COLOR if you can).
- Turn in on the due date!

#### **Assessment**

- Level of participation

**Extension/Modification**

Utilizing the supplemental resources students can extend the research further and create infographics on the additional material.

**Technology:**

- White board
- LCD projector

**Materials:** Short Readings Battles of WW1: Handouts, assignment page.

**Appendixes:**

Time Line

Overview

Casualties Statistics

**Lesson Overview****Battle Summaries**

1. Aisne-Marne Counteroffensive
2. Siberian Expedition
3. Battle of the Atlantic (World War I)
4. Battle of Cantigny
5. Battles of Château-Thierry and Belleau Wood
6. Second Battle of the Marne
7. Meuse-Argonne offensive
8. Saint-Mihiel offensive
9. Battle of Vaux
10. Battle of the Atlantic, 1917–1918
11. Argonne Battlefront
12. Battle of Belleau Wood, 1918

**Infographic Assignment Sheet****Supplemental Resources: to Expand Activity**

1. U.S. Convoy to France
2. Allies Welcome American Troops
3. Continued Fighting, 1918
4. Turning the Tide
5. Allied Air Power
6. Argonne Battlefront
7. The Fight Ends, Nov. 1918
8. African Americans
9. Hispanic Americans
10. Vocabulary

## Student HAND OUT:

### America's Entry into WW1: Piktochart

**DUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** You and your group will be assigned a specific aspect from WW1. You will use the information you acquire to create an infographic using "Piktochart" to present your knowledge to the essential question below:

**Essential Question:** Analyze the underlining causes of WWI and the affects this period of history had on the early 20<sup>th</sup> century including the United States role in Foreign Affairs.

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- Turn in on the due date!

**Citations:**

Infobase Learning - Login

<http://online.factsonfile.com/world-war-i/learning-modules/preface.aspx>

Meuse-Argonne U.S. Army Heroes, 1918 | Student Handouts

<http://www.studenthandouts.com/Gallery/WH10/World-War-I/heroes-of-the-meuse-argonne-wwi.htm>

The Imperial War Museum. ""The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century,"" PBS. PBS, 1996.  
Web. 31 May 2016.

## ***Timeline***

- **June 28, 1914**

Bosnia-Herzegovina belongs to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but its Slavic people would prefer to join the adjacent nation of Serbia.

When the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, visits Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a Serbian nationalist, Gavrilo Princip, shoots and kills him and his wife.

Princip and his coconspirators are arrested, but Austria demands that Serbia subdue its nationalist groups and allow Austria to participate in the trial of those complicit in the assassination. If Serbia does not comply, Austria threatens war.

- **July 1914**

None of the Great Powers are eager for a general war, but they are pulled into it. Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II grants a "blank check" go-ahead to Austrian emperor Franz-Josef. Telegrams and diplomats move back and forth throughout Europe, but the negotiations break down, and during July the various nations begin mobilizing their armed forces. On July 28, Austria declares war on Serbia. Because Serbia is its client state, Russia chooses to mobilize in its defense. Meanwhile, France and Great Britain belong to a loose defensive alliance, known as the Entente Cordiale ("cordial understanding"), with Russia, and it appears they will join in the fight.

- **August 1, 1914**

Germany declares war on Russia. France declares a general mobilization, and Germany moves troops into Luxembourg.

- **August 2, 1914**

Germany demands the right for its troops to pass through neutral Belgium, claiming that France intends to pass through to attack Germany.

- **August 3, 1914**

Belgium refuses the German demand, but German armies enter Belgium en route to France. Germany and France exchange declarations of war.

- **August 4, 1914**

Britain declares war on Germany. By now the war is between the Allied Powers (Russia, France, Belgium, Britain) and the Central

Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria). Turkey (the Ottoman Empire) will join the Central Powers on October 29, 1914; Italy will join the Allies on May 23, 1915.

- **August 4, 1914**

President Woodrow Wilson announces U.S. neutrality in the war.

- **August 19, 1914**

Wilson sends a message to the Senate saying that the "United States must be neutral in fact as well as in name. . . . We must be impartial in thought as well as in action." While exemplary in its appearance, Wilson's own neutrality is forced. As a committed Anglophile and former professor of government, he believes it imperative for the Allied Powers to win the war.

- **August 20, 1914**

Germans capture Brussels, the capital of Belgium, and begin a brutal destruction of Belgium people and property.

- **August 27-30, 1914**

German armies smash Russian opponents at the Battle of Tannenberg in East Prussia. The German victory ensures that Russia will not steamroll the Germans on the eastern front.

- **September 5-9, 1914**

French and German units fight the Battle of the Marne, northeast of Paris. The battle is touch and go, but the French hold their ground, partly because of the arrival of reinforcements brought by Parisian taxicabs. The battle ensures that Germany will not win the war on the western front quickly.

- **September-December 1914**

Both sides on the western front make a race to the sea, intent on controlling the ports on the English Channel. By Christmas, a long series of trenches have been dug on both sides, and trench warfare will dominate for the next three years. Machine guns, barbed wire, and hand grenades give a definite advantage to those who fight defensively. The leading generals on both sides, however, will remain convinced that it is possible to break through the enemy trench lines; in the attempt to do so, both sides will lose thousands, indeed millions of lives over the next three years.

- **October 12-November 11, 1914**

The First Battle of Ypres, fought around the Belgian city of this name, ends in a stalemate.

- **January 3-4, 1915**

The Germans fire shells with xylyl-bromide on the Russian forces on the eastern front, killing an estimated 1,100 Russians. It is the first major use of poison gas in modern warfare.

- **April 22, 1915**

At the start of the Second Battle of Ypres in Belgium, the Germans fire 168 tons of chlorine gas from 4,000 cylinders against their Allied opponents. It is the first use of such chemical weapons on the western front.

- **April 25-December 10, 1915**

The British land several divisions on the Gallipoli Peninsula guarding the Dardanelles with the goal of taking Turkey out of the war, but as the weeks and months pass, they suffer horrendous casualties. They start evacuating their troops on December 10 and complete the operation on January 9, 1915.

- **May 1, 1915**

New York newspapers carry both an advertisement for shipping aboard the British liner *Lusitania*, and a direct warning from the German government that neutrals who sail on British ships in the vicinity of the British Isles do so at their own risk. The *Lusitania* is the biggest passenger ship of the day.

- **May 7, 1915**

A German submarine torpedoes and sinks the *Lusitania* off the Irish coast. The Germans claim the ship was carrying munitions. Of the 1,198 civilians who go down with the ship, 128 are Americans. Among them are the multimillionaire Alfred Vanderbilt and Elbert Hubbard, known for his "A Message to Garcia" (a popular story of an enterprising American who carries a message from President McKinley to the Cuban rebel leader García at the outset of the Spanish-American War). The United States will demand reparations but never succeeds in getting Germany to pay.

- **May 11, 1915**

Speaking to 4,000 recently naturalized citizens in Philadelphia, President Wilson says, "There is such a thing as a man being too

proud to fight." The statement is assailed by former president Theodore Roosevelt, who urges immediate war with Germany.

- **July 2, 1915**

A bomb explodes in the Senate reception room. In a letter to the *Washington Evening Star*, written under an assumed name, the bomber expresses anger over U.S. financial assistance to Britain. The banking house of J. P. Morgan is handling such affairs for Britain and France.

- **July 3, 1915**

Erich Muentzer, a former professor of German at Harvard, appears at the Long Island home of financier J. P. Morgan, Jr., Muentzer shoots Morgan, but the wound is superficial. Caught, Muentzer confesses that he also exploded the bomb in Washington, D.C., the day before. Muentzer will commit suicide in jail on July 6.

- **August 10, 1915**

A military training camp is established at Plattsburgh, New York. Volunteers join at their own expense, with the intention of going on to serve under the flags of different Allied nations in Europe. Other such camps will soon be set up across the United States.

- **September 1, 1915**

In response to President Wilson's demand that Germany cease its attacks on unarmed civilian ships, Germany pledges to do so.

- **December 1915**

Automaker Henry Ford goes to Europe on a personal peace mission. He abandons the attempt late in the month.

- **February 21-December 18, 1916**

For 10 months, fierce fighting rages around the fortress-ringed city of Verdun east of Paris. When it simply tapers off in December, neither side has gained much of anything, but the casualties total some 650,000.

- **March 24, 1916**

A German submarine attacks an unarmed French passenger ship, the *Sussex*. The ship does not sink, but about 80 people are killed and many others injured.

- **April 18, 1916**

Wilson sends a public message to Germany, again demanding that submarines refrain from attacking passenger ships. On May 4, the German chancellor agrees to this, in what is known as the *Sussex pledge*.

- **April 20, 1916**

The Escadrille Americaine, a fighter plane unit composed of American volunteers, has been formed by the French air force. On this day, its seven American pilots are assigned to the front lines. In succeeding months it will fly numerous combat sorties, and it grows to include 38 Americans. As the United States remains neutral, the unit's name is changed to Escadrille Lafayette in December 1916.

- **May 31-June 1, 1916**

Off Jutland Island in the North Sea, British and German ships engage in a great sea battle. Because the British lose 14 ships and some 6,100 men and the Germans lose 11 ships and 2,550 men, the Germans claim victory, but in fact the British remain in control of the high seas.

- **June 3, 1916**

Congress passes the National Defense Act, which authorizes a standing army of 175,000.

- **July 1-November 18, 1916**

Along the Somme River, northwest of Paris, the British and Germans engage in months of futile battles; by the end, the British have advanced about four miles; total dead are some 300,000, with another 800,000 wounded.

- **July 30, 1916**

An ammunition dump on Black Tom Island (in New York Harbor) blows up. Seven people are killed; the Statue of Liberty is damaged, and windows are blown out in Brooklyn. The explosion is widely believed to have been caused by German agents.

- **August 29, 1916**

Congress passes the Naval Act of 1916, commonly called "Big Navy Act," which authorizes a 10-year plan to increase U.S. naval strength.

- **October 8, 1916**

A German submarine sinks five merchant ships (British, Dutch, Norwegian) off Nantucket Island, Massachusetts.

- **November 7, 1916**

Woodrow Wilson is reelected president of the United States. One of Wilson's campaign slogans was "He kept us out of war."

- **January 1, 1917**

The Arabs in what will become Saudi Arabia have revolted against the Ottoman Turks, and on this day, T. E. Lawrence, a British scholar-diplomat who will become widely known as Lawrence of Arabia, is assigned to serve as liaison between the Arabs and the British supporting forces.

- **January 9, 1917**

Kaiser Wilhelm II decides to renounce the *Sussex* pledge and to commence unrestricted submarine warfare.

- **January 19, 1917**

Arthur Zimmermann, the German foreign minister, sends a coded telegram to the German ambassador in Mexico. The telegram is intercepted by British intelligence and passed on the President Wilson. The telegram contains an offer by Germany to restore to Mexico the lost territories of the American Southwest if it will make war on the United States. Wilson chooses to keep the telegram a secret.

- **January 22, 1917**

In a speech to the Senate, Wilson calls for "a peace without victory."

- **February 1, 1917**

The new German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare takes effect.

- **February 3, 1917**

The United States breaks off diplomatic relations with Germany.

- **March 1, 1917**

Wilson reveals the Zimmermann note to the American press. More Americans than ever are prepared to make war against Germany.

- **March 1-21, 1917**

German U-boats sink eight U.S. merchant ships. Wilson, realizing that he must act, calls a special session of Congress.

- **March 12-15, 1917**

An uprising in Saint Petersburg against Czar Nicholas leads to the czar's abdication. Russia soon has a new provisional government, led by Alexander Kerensky, who vows to remain in the war.

- **April 2, 1917**

President Wilson asks Congress for a declaration of war on Germany. One of the most memorable phrases is "the world must be made safe for democracy."

- **April 4, 1917**

The Senate approves the declaration, by a vote of 82-6.

- **April 6, 1917**

The House of Representatives approves Wilson's request for a declaration of war. Fifty members vote against it—one of them is Jeannette Rankin of Montana, the first woman to serve in that body. Wilson signs the declaration.

- **April 7, 1917**

Songwriter George M. Cohan composes the song "Over There," which rapidly becomes Americans' favorite song of the war.

- **April 13, 1917**

Wilson establishes, by executive order, the Committee of Public Information (CPI). Chairman George Creel will extend his mission to all parts of American life, publicizing and promoting the war effort.

- **May 1917**

The United States has by now enlisted more than 100 chemists in academic, industrial, and government laboratories to produce effective poison gases.

- **May 18, 1917**

Congress approves the Selective Service as proposed by President Wilson.

- **May 19, 1917**

Herbert Hoover becomes Food Administrator for the war effort. Hoover will soon begin to issue calls for voluntary "wheatless" and "meatless" days.

- **May 26, 1917**

Gen. John "Black Jack" Pershing is named commander of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). (His nickname comes from having commanded African-American soldiers in the American West.) Pershing is also known for his pursuit of Pancho Villa on both sides of the Mexican border.

- **June 13, 1917**

Paris explodes with joy at the arrival of General Pershing. When he visits Napoleon's tomb, Pershing is presented with one of Napoleon's swords. Impulsively, Pershing kisses it, and endears himself to the French people.

- **July 1917**

A new Russian offensive fails dismally. Kerensky's prestige in Russia is diminished, and the new Bolshevik Party—led by V. I. Lenin—starts to gain ground.

- **July 4, 1917**

A small group of American soldiers in Paris march to the cemetery where the marquis de Lafayette is buried. Lt. Col. Charles Stanton, a quartermaster, there declares, "Lafayette, we are here!"

- **July 15, 1917**

Congress passes the Espionage Act. Two thousand cases will be prosecuted under the act during the war's duration.

- **July 20, 1917**

Blindfolded, the U.S. secretary of war draws the first number for the draft—258—from a large glass jar.

- **October 1917**

Led by Lenin and Leon Trotsky, Russian Bolsheviks overthrow the provisional government. Lenin proceeds to establish the first Communist government seen anywhere, thereby drawing the

alarm of Allied conservatives. Trotsky announces his plan of "No War, No Peace" with the Germans. Trotsky intends neither to prosecute the war nor to sign a treaty with Germany.

- **October 24-November 10, 1917**

The Italians have come close to defeating the Austrians during eleven battles along the Isonzo River in northeast Italy. Now the Germans provide reinforcements to the Austrians and they launch an offensive near Caporetto, north of Trieste. Caught off guard, the Italians suffer heavy casualties as they retreat all the way to the Piave River, northeast of Venice.

- **November 2, 1917**

Three Americans are killed and 11 are captured by a German raiding party at Artois, France. Cpl. James Gresham, Pvt. Merle Hay, and Pvt. Thomas Enright are later honored as the first enlisted men to be killed in action on the western front.

- **November 20, 1917**

The Battle of Cambrai begins in France. No Americans are involved in this, the first battle where tanks are used in a group. Three hundred twenty-four Mark IV British tanks go into battle. Slow and prone to breakdowns, they do not appear as instant winners.

- **November-December 1917**

Germany responds to Trotsky's policy of "No war, no peace," by pressing deep into Russia and taking more territory.

- **January 8, 1918**

Wilson outlines his Fourteen Points before a joint session of Congress. The points include calls for a resurrected Poland, freedom of the seas, and an end to all secret diplomacy and treaties ("open covenants, openly arrived at"). Public response is overwhelmingly positive. Wilson succeeds in capturing the moral high ground.

- **March 3, 1918**

At Brest-Litovsk, Russian commissioners sign a treaty that yields one-third of European Russia to Germany. This punitive treaty gives Germany breathing room on the eastern front, but it also alerts other nations what they may expect if Germany is

victorious. Immediately following the treaty, German divisions are transferred from the Russian to the western front.

- **March 21, 1918**

German general Erich von Ludendorff launches an offensive in the Somme region, north of Paris. He gambles that his sledgehammer blows will cave in the Allied defenses before the Americans reach the scene.

- **April 24, 1918**

The only battle between tanks in the war takes place near Amiens, France. Australian units supported by three or four tanks throw back a German attack with an equal number of tanks.

- **April 29, 1918**

American captain Eddie Rickenbacher and Capt. James Hall down a German plane. It is Rickenbacher's first "kill" and only the fourth for the United States so far. About a month later, he changes his name to "Rickenbacker" to avoid being connected with his Swiss-German heritage. By the end of the war, Rickenbacker will have shot down 26 German airplanes.

- **May 1918**

The United States establishes the Chemical Warfare Service, and during the summer the U.S. Army will establish a unit in France that will occasionally fire various poison gases at the Germans.

- **May 20, 1918**

Wilson signs the Overton Act. The act gives the president authority to coordinate or consolidate executive offices in any way he sees fit in the prosecution of the war. Constitutional historians have seen this as potentially a dangerous piece of legislation, but Wilson will use it sparingly.

- **June 1, 1918**

A U.S. machine gun unit joins French units in the defense of Château-Thierry, just northeast of Paris.

- **June 4, 1918**

Ernest Hemingway's service as a Red Cross driver in Italy begins. He is one of many Americans-some of whom will become notable figures later on-who serve as ambulance drivers.

Among them are E. E. Cummings, Archibald MacLeish, Walt Disney, and Ray Kroc, founder of McDonald's.

- **June 6-26, 1918**

U.S. Marine units stop a German attack at Belleau Wood, not far north of Paris. The marines suffer 7,000 casualties and earn the name "Devil Dogs" from the Germans.

- **July 1, 1918**

American troops attack and take Vaux, near Château-Thierry.

- **July 8, 1918**

Ernest Hemingway is wounded by an Austrian mortar shell. He spends several months at the Red Cross hospital in Milan; he will use this experience in his novel *Farewell to Arms* (1929).

- **July 10, 1918**

Six fully loaded U.S. American bombers, low on gas, land in Koblenz, Germany. It is the largest single surrender of American aircraft during the war. German propaganda makes much of this event.

- **July 14, 1918**

Quentin Roosevelt, youngest son of former president Theodore Roosevelt, is shot down and killed near the village of Chamery, France. The German airmen bury him with military honors.

- **July 18, 1918**

The Allied Forces (French, British, and American) go on the offensive all along the western front. Unlike other such beginnings, this one will not prove to be a false start, and day by day they drive the Germans back.

- **August 26, 1918**

German units start to retreat to the Hindenburg Line, which the Germans call the Siegfried Line. Rather than a wall, it is a four-layer defensive network northeast of Paris. General Von Ludendorff refers to this as the "Black Day" of the German army.

- **August 30, 1918**

French Marshal Foch visits General Pershing at his headquarters. Foch wants to break up the U.S. Army to serve in piecemeal segments with the French and British. Pershing absolutely

refuses. He asks Foch to grant him a sector, any sector of the front, but insists that the Americans must fight as one. Foch soon grants Pershing the Meuse-Argonne sector.

- **September 1918**

The first outbreak of influenza (later called the Spanish flu) appears in the United States. It begins in army camps and navy bases, and spreads rapidly to the civilian population.

- **September 1, 1918**

By now there are more than 1 million U.S. troops in France.

- **September 11, 1918**

Some 4,500 U.S. soldiers land at Archangel on the northwest coast of Russia. They are part of an Allied force intended to prevent a Bolshevik victory in the ongoing civil war between the White (pro-Czarist) and Red (Bolshevik) Russians. The U.S. part in this intervention will long be remembered in Russia.

- **September 12-13, 1918**

The U.S. First Army begins its attack against the St. Mihiel salient. This is the first offensive conducted solely by Americans in the war, and they thoroughly rout the Germans.

- **September 26, 1918**

The U.S. First Army begins the Meuse-Argonne offensive in the region east of Verdun, near the Luxembourg border. This is one of the largest operations of the war. French and Italian units move out of the way, according to plan, and U.S. units take their place. The entire offensive, involving the movement of about 1 million men, is directed by U.S. colonel George Marshall.

- **September 29, 1918**

After a disastrous defeat of its army in Macedonia, Bulgaria, one of the Central Powers, drops out of the war.

- **October 1918**

The Spanish flu (influenza) pandemic worsens dramatically. One the worst day, 800 people die in Philadelphia. Hardest hit are those cities that are close to army and navy bases. Some 500,000 Americans will die before the pandemic abates in April 1919.

- **October 1, 1918**

Combined Arab and British forces enter Damascus, Syria. Accompanying them is Lawrence of Arabia, widely credited for his courageous and inspiring leadership during the 21-month campaign to drive the Turks out of their empire which includes the Arabian Peninsula and the Near East.

- **October 1-8, 1918**

In the Argonne Forest, a battalion of 600 New Yorkers finds itself trapped by Germans in a valley. Dubbed "The Lost Battalion," by the time they are relieved, only 194 survive.

- **October 4-30, 1918**

The second phase of the Meuse-Argonne offensive. By now the Americans are making gains all along the line.

- **October 6, 1918**

Prince Max of Baden, newly appointed German chancellor by the kaiser, initiates peace negotiations through intermediaries in Switzerland. Max appeals to President Wilson to seek a peace based on the Fourteen Points.

- **October 8, 1918**

Cpl. Alvin York outshoots an entire German machine gun battalion; he silences 35 guns and kills about 17 men. York and his depleted squad of nine men then capture about 132 German prisoners. York will receive the Medal of Honor and decorations from most of the Allied nations. When drafted, York had asked to be a conscientious objector: the request was denied.

- **October 10, 1918**

A German submarine torpedoes a British passenger ship off the Irish coast; 292 lives are lost. This effectively ends the peace discussions between Prince Max and President Wilson, who now declares that Germany will have to accept the terms of the Allied military.

- **October 29, 1918**

German sailors mutiny at Kiel. Their commanders had urged them to make a suicidal venture out of the harbor to attack British ships. German soldiers sent to suppress the mutiny join the sailors and rebellion spreads.

- **October 30, 1918**

Realizing that the Central Powers were on the verge of defeat, Turkey drops out of the war.

- **November 1, 1918**

The largest U.S. ground force up to that time sent to battle joins with the French in an offensive along the Meuse River.

- **November 4, 1918**

Austria-Hungary signs an armistice with the Allied Powers. Kaiser Wilhelm's top military leaders inform him the struggle is at an end.

- **November 9, 1918**

Germany declares that the German Empire is at an end. The new German Republic is proclaimed.

- **November 10, 1918**

Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates and goes into exile in Holland.

- **November 11, 1918**

At 5 AM, French and German representatives sign an armistice in a railroad car at Compiègne, France. Hostilities end at 11 AM

- **January-May 1919**

In Paris, Wilson negotiates with Georges Clemenceau of France, Lloyd George of Britain, and Vittorio Orlando of Italy. Wilson's dearest wish is to have the clause that establishes the new League of Nations in the treaty. He obtains this clause but has to agree to the French desire to punish Germany with reparations, and to the British and French desire to retain their colonial empires. They do so under a new system of mandates, intended to prepare colonial peoples around the world for eventual self-rule.

- **June 28, 1919**

Germany is forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles, named after the great palace outside Paris where the ceremony takes place.

- **July 10, 1919**

Wilson, recently returned home, presents the Versailles Treaty to the Senate. He expresses the view that the treaty is essential to the well-being of the United States and the world. A group of senators, led by Henry Cabot Lodge, oppose the clause that

would require the United States to aid France in the event of a future German invasion.

- **September 1919**

Facing Senate resistance, Wilson goes on a speaking tour. He travels by railway car, giving speeches about the importance of the treaty. Wilson collapses in Pueblo, Colorado, from exhaustion.

- **October 2, 1919**

Back in Washington, D.C., Wilson suffers a stroke that leaves him disabled. For the next year, his wife will limit access to the invalid president. Any compromise between Wilson and his Senate opponents is out of the question.

- **November 19, 1919**

The U.S. Senate rejects the Versailles Treaty. It will do so again on March 19, 1920.

**Citation:** "Timeline." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=73418>>.

## *Overview*

The destructive conflict that Americans know as World War I and Europeans known as "the Great War" erupted in August 1914 when a long-standing quarrel between Austria-Hungary and neighboring Serbia took a deadly turn. On June 28, 1914, a Bosnian-Serbian student named Gavrilo Princip, furious at Austria-Hungary's interference in Serbia's affairs, shot the heir to the Austrian throne and his wife. With this act, he set off an explosion that would rip Europe apart in the next four years and be felt around the world. It took only one month before escalating anger and cries for retaliation for the dual murders caused a war to break out between Serbia and Austria-Hungary. In the next few weeks, this war, considered at first to be only a localized conflict between these two countries, spread to the major countries of Europe.

Storm clouds had already been gathering over Europe for several years as nations, long concerned with the preservation of their power and prestige, had taken major steps to keep rivals at bay. In fact, by 1914, two powerful military alliances had been formed: on one side, Germany and Austria-Hungary, calling themselves the Central Powers; on the other, France, Britain, and Russia, which would later be called the Allies. With Germany bound to support Austria-Hungary, and Russia concerned with the autonomy of Serbia, all it took was an assassin's bullet to light the spark of a major war by having the big nations come to the defense of their little allies.

In the beginning, most of the men in charge of the military in these countries believed that this would be a relatively short war. However, the Great War went on for four years of slaughter and destruction, defying many of the past rules of war. The world was literally remodeled by this great war that pitted Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey against France, Great Britain, the United States, China, and Russia, with many other smaller nations joining in and taking sides.

This was the first time in history that a war would be fought on an increasingly brutal scale because of the new technology that had become a fascination of all the major countries. Scientific experimentation had led to developing tangible products which held the promise of both practical and entertaining uses. Some of the most notable successes were automobiles, airplanes, wireless communication, and motion pictures. These incredible inventions were expected to create new and better relationships among peoples worldwide. But World War I turned even positive technology into weapons of war, as automobiles were converted into tanks and fast-moving military vehicles, airplanes became the means of hurling death from the skies, and wireless communication and movies fed hate-filled propaganda.

Having machines in the air that could hurl bullets and bombs from the skies brought about a rapid and radical change in thinking about war, which until then had been seen as a contest in which casualties were confined to the military. It became clear that war would no longer be confined to soldiers on one side fighting against enemy peers on the other side. The new military word on all sides was "strategic bombardment," in which explosive weapons from the air would now be aimed not just at military targets but also at civilian targets believed to be sites of the enemy's war industries. War would be inclusive, a threat to everybody-civilian and military-because bombs dropped from a fast-moving airplane could not hit targets with perfect precision. Cities and towns would now be hit, in addition to military targets. Bombardments from the skies would pile up the dead, the wounded, and cause starvation in the cities and towns and on the farms.

Technology also led to impressive innovations in military weapons that made the old-style rifles virtually obsolete and would forever change war from a shooting battle at a relatively close distance to one of deadly competition from afar. Heavy artillery-weapons too heavy for individuals to move-became a major factor, as both sides, developing ever better levels of technical efficiency, produced self-

propelled guns and howitzers that could fire killing projectiles long distances. The goal of weapons development was mass destruction, and no sooner was one introduced than there was a plan for a better, more deadly one. New, rapid-firing machine guns were developed that could kill with great efficiency. Fire-throwing weapons could produce horrific deaths for men in confined spaces. Even the submarine, which in 1914 was still considered a technological experiment, within a few years became a matchless destroyer of commercial ships.

The development of all these instruments of destruction was rapid and produced changes, not only in the way war was fought, but also in the way in which it was thought about. The technology of World War I showed that humans had made an exponential leap in learning and inventiveness and that, therefore, never again would there be a certainty about how a war would be fought. Scientists went on to produce the atomic bomb in World War II and since then, the world has lived under the threat of nuclear bombs. In World War I scientists also developed varieties of poison gas as a way to disable and kill soldiers. These were the forerunners of currently feared chemical and biological weapons.

World War I began as a war on two fronts, west and east. The western front was a battle line in France, in effect separating the Germans and the Allies. The line was actually a double track of trenches, constructed by both sides to maintain their defensive positions, with the area between called no-man's-land. Trench warfare created hellish conditions that soldiers of both sides were forced to endure, both in the trenches and at the times when they were ordered to go "over the top," basically becoming targets of the deadly weapons on the other side. The battles of this war often measured victory simply by the side that had killed the most. For more than three years neither side advanced very far from their defensive positions, and World War I's trench warfare remains a sad synonym for slaughter.

The eastern front was a large area between Russia and Austria-Hungary, extending as far north as Germany and Poland and as far south as the mouth of the Danube River in the Black Sea. While Czar Nicholas of Russia felt justified in warring against Austria-Hungary and Germany, he was either unconcerned or oblivious to the fact that his country was a powder keg about to explode. As the military and civilian deaths mounted from battles, starvation, and freezing, and as people began marching in protest or gathering in food riots, revolution swept the country. Vladimir Lenin stepped into this chaos in Russia with his dream of replacing capitalism, which he saw as the cause of wars, with socialism. He promoted his vision with the slogan that socialism would give the people peace, land, and bread. Revolution in Russia replaced the war against the Central Powers when the Bolsheviks—meaning "the majority"—under Lenin took power. By December 1917 Russia's involvement in the war was over, freeing Germany from having to fight on the eastern front. Lenin had emerged as the victor in establishing the socialist government that he had fought for, now renamed the All-Russian Communist Party. World War I had pushed his country too far, bringing to a climax all the anger, misery, corruption, and abuse that the mass of Russians had so long endured. The Russian people opted for a new social and political order, one that few predicted would make such an impact on the rest of the 20th century.

If there were one word to associate with World War I, which involved about 93 percent of the world's population and left some 38 million soldiers and civilians killed or wounded it would be *casualties*. The war decimated a generation of Europe's youth and left more than 120,000 U.S. servicemen dead. Largely unreported was the fact that the Allies' losses were nearly three times more than those of the Germans, who were consistently superior in training, weapons, tactics, and leadership. The French and British commanders too often ordered actions out of military incompetence or sheer pride. In the Battle of Verdun, for example, the British army's dead and wounded on a single day numbered more than 60,000 because of the stubbornness of the British generals.

It is generally agreed that it was the coming of the "Yanks" that saved the Allies from defeat. The United States did not want to enter the war, and President Woodrow Wilson seemed determined to keep the nation out of the conflict, getting reelected in 1916 on that promise. But things changed. Germany not only tried to get Mexico to invade the United States but also proclaimed that its submarines would attack U.S. merchant ships. U.S. self-interest was threatened when Germany would no longer respect the rights of American shipping, and the pressure on Wilson to confront Germany gave him no choice but to declare that the United States would join the Allies in war. Examining the dilemma faced by Wilson should prompt students to reflect on how other U.S. presidents have responded to assaults on U.S. self-interest, whether they were indirect-such as the threats to oil supplies that led to the Gulf War-or direct, such as the September 11, 2001, attacks that led to the war in Afghanistan.

Because so many of the American people did not want to get involved with a European war, Wilson had a problem. He had to get the people behind him by convincing them that the United States was confronting an evil enemy. He set up the Committee on Public Information to whip up patriotism. It demonized the enemy, building up hate, all focused on the "evil" people, some of them at home. Patriotism had Americans turning viciously on neighbors with German names in World War I.

This suspicion of neighbors whose origins or ancestry were an enemy country set a tone that would be seen in other 20th-century wars, most notably in World War II, when Japanese-American residents were moved from their homes and confined in camps. Even Americans of German and Italian heritage sometimes felt antagonism from fellow workers, neighbors, and school classmates during World War II. In the war on terrorism that was launched in 2001, many people of Middle Eastern heritage were arrested and detained, often without cause. Others experienced prejudice or hate crimes. The fueling of fear, anger, and prejudice by a propaganda machine was yet another legacy of World War I.

The Great War radically changed the role of women. Women took over many of the jobs that had been men's work before the war. The war had come at a time when many American women were boldly marching for the right to vote, pointing to the dozen or so countries that had already taken this step. Women were proclaiming in action and words that they were not going to fade back into the home when the war ended. Several decades would pass before women gained a more equal position. It took the women's liberation movement to help them achieve greater rights in education and employment. But World War I had reshaped and permanently changed the role of women, who, before the century was over, would be donning military uniforms and joining men in the military.

While the Allies forced the Germans to accept an armistice, due in great part to the intervention of the United States, they proceeded to rack up a great failure in the Treaty of Versailles. As this book shows, Wilson's Fourteen Points for a just and lasting peace were effectively ignored as the British and French governments opted for revenge and punishment. They carved up the Middle East, solidified their colonial empires, and humiliated Germany by making it take full moral and financial responsibility for the war.

In such negotiations, the choice is often either fairness or sowing new seeds of destruction. The World War I treaty proved this, as the book shows by relating how a former German army corporal who fought the doughboys in the Argonne was determined to settle scores and regain all and more that Germany had lost at Versailles. His name was Adolf Hitler. Seeing "revenge, greed, and stupidity" in the Versailles treaty, Pope Benedict XV said prophetically, "Nations do not die; in humiliation and revenge, they pass from generation to generation the sorrowful heritage of hatred and retaliation." Hitler fit this prophecy. World War I's most devastating legacy was to become the direct cause of World War II.

Many Americans today know little of World War I because, as some have noted, it fell between the United States's two major crises, the

Civil War and World War II. Yet, the war inspired a number of creative works that are still familiar to many Americans. Fiction and poetry are often appealing ways for students to gain greater perspective on history. Writers such as Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and Edith Wharton produced World War I novels that remain relevant. Notable writers-both men and women-from countries on both sides of the hostilities emerged as journalists and war correspondents. Great poetry was written by various men who saw action, such as Wilfred Owen, killed in the war, and Siegfried Sassoon, who suffered later in life from shell shock. One of the most oft-quoted lines in American poetry-"I have a rendezvous with death"-comes from "Rendezvous," written by Alan Seeger, who did indeed die in combat in 1916. Wrenching poetry was also written by women from all the major countries involved in the war, one most notably by Britain's Dame Edith Sitwell, called "The Dancer," with its haunting first line, "The floors are slippery with blood."

In 1927, T. E. Lawrence, the legendary "Lawrence of Arabia," published *Revolt in the Desert*, his first person account of his World War I service in the Middle East. Earlier nonfiction books and articles had been written by women seeking peace, like Clara Zetkin of Germany and America's Jane Addams, a peace activist who helped found the American Civil Liberties Union in 1920. One of the most powerful novels to come out of World War I was *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by a German, Erich Maria Remarque. Its international success led to a Hollywood movie, one of several that portrayed the waste and futility of the war as experienced by the mass of soldiers on both sides. The British scholar J. R. R. Tolkien affected by his experience at the Battle of the Somme, where some 19,000 soldiers were killed in one day, years later created his masterful *Lord of the Rings*, a mythical account of how the struggle between good and evil can shift the balance of power in the world.

Movies about World War I have long since been displaced by movies of more recent wars, although occasionally there is some recognition of the war in the popular media. World War I was the

first war to be recorded by moving pictures; the History Channel on television periodically carries programs that show graphic newsreel films of the war. In 2001, the Arts and Entertainment Channel (A&E) featured a special movie, *The Lost Battalion*, the story of American soldiers trapped in the Argonne forest.

In the 1980s, recording artist John McCutcheon produced a CD with a touching song titled "Christmas in the Trenches," about a beautiful moment in World War I. It was Christmas 1914, when the soldiers of both sides began singing Christmas songs and walked into no-man's-land without weapons, but with brandy, chocolates, and musical instruments to share, both sides joyful for this brief time of peace before they got back to killing each other. This same event was recounted in a book by Stanley Weintraub, *Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce* (2001), one of the hundreds of books written about World War I.

There is much still to be learned from World War I, because the issues that emerged early in the 20th century have not gone away. The Great War showed how deep nationalist feelings can be and how these can escalate when people sharing a certain kinship feel threatened by another labeled "the enemy." The conflicts that triggered World War I were relatively minor at first, but the war itself turned these into issues of great magnitude. The lessons of World War I still must be studied so that its tragic history will never be repeated.

**Citation:** "Overview." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=77032>>.

## *Aisne-Marne Counteroffensive*

July 18-August 6, 1918

The German army had risked everything on its series of offensives from 21 March through July 1918. Although six had been planned, only five were executed because the final effort, "Hagen," was preempted by the reaction of the Allied armies to the threat posed on the western front. German field commanders were initially skeptical of the fighting spirit and effectiveness of the rapidly arriving Americans, but the sharp engagements at Cantigny and Château-Thierry/Belleau Wood in May and June proved them wrong.

The Second Battle of the Marne salient, 15-18 July, was the beginning of the end for the Central Powers. The quartermaster general (deputy chief of staff) of the German army, Erich Ludendorff, had thrown two armies against the southeastern face of the penetration perimeter beginning on 15 July, intending to take Reims. The plan had been compromised, and the French were well prepared to meet it. Within three days the German High Command ended the offensive.

Even as the battle for Reims raged, the Allied commander in chief, General Ferdinand Foch, husbanded a reserve of 20 divisions. As soon as the Allies had the strategic initiative, Foch unleashed them. On 18 July he launched a counteroffensive against the western face of the salient, with supporting attacks in the southwest and southeast. Four French armies participated in the attack. Two American divisions, the 1st and 2d, along with the 1st Moroccan Division, constituted the XX (French) Corps, which was charged with driving against the west face of the salient toward the east, just south of Soissons, to cut the major rail and road connection between it and Château-Thierry. Three more American divisions, the 3d, 4th, and 26th, participated in the main effort. Four others—the 28th, 32d, 42d, and 77th—were in reserve. The I (U.S.) Corps controlled the actions of the 26th (U.S.) and the 167th (French) Divisions, and the III

(U.S.) Corps was in reserve to provide administrative support to American divisions in the Tenth (French) Army.

A U.S. division was twice as large as, and substantially more powerful than, its European counterparts. The most battle-experienced divisions of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), the 1st and 2d, committed more than 50,000 infantrymen, artillerymen, and engineers to the attack. These two divisions, with the Moroccans sandwiched between them, spearheaded the assault, pushing forward for nearly four days in the face of withering German fire and through gas-filled ravines. American junior officers and noncommissioned officers fell in large numbers and were replaced by less-experienced leaders from within the units. The resilience and cohesion of the American units bent but never fractured. This test marked the maturing of the AEF. The 1st Division took 3,500 German prisoners and 90 guns from the seven German divisions with which it came into contact. It suffered 1,752 killed and 5,289 wounded. The 2d Division took 2,900 prisoners and 75 German guns while suffering 4,392 total casualties. In all, some 310,000 Americans participated in the offensive, and 67,000 became casualties. The Allied offensive wiped out the Marne salient and forced Ludendorff to call off his planned Flanders offensive.

The American contribution was important in the Allied success. The offensive revealed the truth of the maxims that a combination of arms is essential for the success of tactical actions and that cooperation among allied nations is essential for victory. The Allied nations of World War I learned that lesson; the Central Powers and their Axis successors did not.

**Citation:** "Aisne-Marne Counteroffensive." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=79374>>.

## *Siberian Expedition*

August 18, 1918-April 1920

On August 18, 1918, 9,014 American soldiers, including the 27th and 31st Infantry, then in the Philippines, and selected men from the 8th Division in California, were placed under the command of Major General William S. Graves and sent to Vladivostok to join Japanese and other Allied troops in Siberia. In this Siberian Expedition, they were assigned to intervene in the civil war then taking place in Russia. The object was to secure a government friendly to the war effort by helping to protect Allied troops.

Even as the war in Europe ground onward, fighting continued in northern Russia and Siberia. The Russian Revolution had begun in February 1917, and Lenin had taken over as premier on January 7, 1918. Afterward, Lenin signed a treaty with Germany and released hundreds of thousands of German, Austrian, Hungarian, and Turkish prisoners of war from Siberian detention. In the same region, many Czechs had deserted and formed a legion of 50,000 to 70,000 men. Their leader claimed the legion as the future Army of Czechoslovakia and offered its services to France and against the Bolsheviks. The Czechs hoped they could fight their way to Archangel in northern Russia, where American troops were also engaged.

On July 23, 1918, a Siberian republic had been declared, but there were competing claims to political leadership. Red Bolsheviks, White Anti-Bolsheviks, Russian army soldiers, bandits, warlords, Cossacks, former prisoners-of-war, and men from foreign armies vied for power. The situation merited the words of President Woodrow Wilson that "military intervention would add to the present sad confusion in Russia rather than cure it." Pressured by allies to send men to Siberia, an area more than half the size of the United States, Wilson ordered them to intervene.

General Graves maintained that the only reason for intervention was "to aid the Czecho-Slovakians to consolidate their forces and to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defense." He resisted pressure to intervene in the Russian Civil War on the side of the White Army. In January 1920, the Czechs instead fought eastward and defeated a large force of Cossacks. The Americans guarded the line from Lake Baikal to Vladivostok on the Pacific until all the Czechs had evacuated. Americans did, therefore, intervene in the Russian Civil War to help anti-Bolshevik forces. Once the Czechs reached Vladivostok, the survivors boarded ships for Europe, where they became the nucleus of the Czech army. In April 1920, the last Americans withdrew, but the Japanese did not follow until 1925.

American casualties numbered 35 killed and 135 who died of disease. Fifty-two others were wounded and 50 deserted. The American intervention was a failure. A parallel intervention in Archangel in August 1918, landed 1,200 men from the French Foreign Legion, and some from the British Royal Marines and the U.S. Navy and Marines. They served under a British officer, General Poole. Later, a regiment was added of 4,487 men mainly from Michigan and Wisconsin. Both of these interventions were largely forgotten in subsequent years. America's intervention, however, set the tone for its relations with the new Soviet Union. The United States refused to recognize the Soviet government until 1933.

**Citation:** "Siberian Expedition." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.

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## ***Battle of the Atlantic (World War I)***

1915-1917

Following the 1916 Battle of Jutland, the Germans shifted their campaign at sea away from large surface actions in favor of wholesale submarine warfare. German U-boats and surface raiders attempted to cut off Britain and France from the raw materials, industrial production, and military support of the United States, Canada, and overseas colonial possessions. The Battle of the Atlantic saw extensive use of the submarine in combat for the first time and ushered in a new era of naval warfare.

When war began in August 1914, Britain possessed the world's largest merchant marine. At nearly 20 million tons, it represented half of the world's total tonnage. Britain also possessed the world's largest and most powerful navy. The naval and merchant fleets of Britain, France, Russia, Japan, and later the United States gave the Allies an advantage at sea that was overwhelming. This maritime superiority provided access to world resources and markets, while it could deny similar access to the Central Powers.

Britain declared a blockade of Germany that threatened to strangle the Central Powers economically and hinder their ability to wage a protracted war. The British blockade ultimately included not only war matériel but all raw materials and foodstuffs. In February 1915 Germany responded by declaring the waters around the British Isles a war zone and commenced unrestricted submarine warfare against Allied and neutral vessels. The strategy was intended to retaliate against the increasingly effective British blockade and to cut off Britain and France from overseas support. Germany's use of unrestricted submarine warfare risked the loss of American lives and ships, however, which could bring the United States into the war.

Germany began its submarine offensive in 1915 with only 29 U-boats. The destruction of passenger liners and neutral vessels, most

notably the sinking of the British liner *Lusitania* by *U-20* in May 1915, with 124 Americans among the 1,201 passengers killed, brought considerable diplomatic pressure on Germany to cease its U-boat campaign. In early June 1915, the German Admiralty instructed U-boat commanders not to sink passenger liners on sight. On 18 September 1915, Berlin suspended the unrestricted submarine warfare campaign. During 1915, German U-boats had sunk 850,000 gross tons of shipping, but the British had launched more than 1.3 million tons. After much debate in Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm II approved the resumption of submarine warfare in 1916; the single restriction was that only armed merchant ships would be sunk without warning. German policy wavered under diplomatic pressure during 1916 when U-boats were having moderate success against Allied shipping.

The Allies immediately labeled the German U-boat campaign illegal and barbaric. U-boat commanders attempted to conduct themselves according to the traditional rules of cruiser warfare, but technology had overtaken custom and law. Surfacing to warn vessels and allowing crews to abandon ship before sinking them could prove fatal to U-boats. Merchant vessels were often armed, and a wireless radio broadcast could alert nearby warships. Consequently, U-boats increasingly relied on submerged attacks made without warning.

In truth, the U-boat offensive was no more a violation of international law than was the British blockade. Both infringed on the rights of neutrals to trade with belligerents. Until April 1917, when the United States joined the war against Germany, British violations of American neutral shipping rights through the detention and inspections of neutral vessels were far more numerous than violations by German U-boats. However, as Allied propaganda vividly illustrated, German mistakes cost lives, while British mistakes cost only money and time and could largely be rectified in Admiralty court.

Despite the diplomatic risks, on 1 February 1917 Berlin again instituted a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. German naval planners believed if the U-boats could sink 600,000 tons of shipping per month, Britain would be driven from the war and the Allies would be forced to seek peace on German terms. German leaders believed that the United States, an inconsequential land power, would not be able to make a meaningful contribution on the ground in France before Germany had won the war. As expected, the policy pushed the United States to declare war against Germany in April 1917. However, the great success of the U-boats did threaten Britain and France with defeat. Sinkings rose precipitously to an unprecedented 860,000 tons in April 1917; in three months, more than 2 million tons of Allied and neutral shipping had been sent to the bottom. The Allies could not replace lost tonnage fast enough. At the same time, U-boat losses were low.

While improvements in technology and tactics were available to help meet the U-boat menace, the real solution was the convoy system. Vessels carrying essential cargoes, from ammunition to foodstuffs, gathered at key ports and were escorted in large groups by Allied warships. The British Admiralty had initially avoided the convoy system because, among other things, it believed there were not sufficient destroyers to escort convoys and protect the Grand Fleet in the North Sea at the same time. The U-boat emergency of 1917 raised the importance of merchant-vessel protection and forced a closer look that showed the escort problem was not insurmountable.

The assistance of the U.S. Navy made implementation of the convoy system even more complete. When Congress declared war on Germany in April 1917, the Navy Department sent Rear Admiral William S. Sims to London to consult with the Admiralty, and Sims quickly became a proponent of the convoy system. Although he met widespread resistance in both London and Washington, he pushed for full U.S. integration into the system as soon as possible. By August, 35 U.S. Navy destroyers were engaged in convoy duty, operating out of Queenstown, Ireland. They represented more than

one-third of the total number of destroyers engaged in Atlantic escort duty. Soon U.S. warships were regularly escorting convoys between Halifax, New York, Hampton Roads, Gibraltar, and the British Isles.

Although full implementation of the convoy system took time, sinkings from U-boats immediately began to drop. The protection offered by escorts and the lower probability that U-boats would intercept a target (when compared the likelihood of finding one of hundreds of ships sailing alone) yielded immediate results. It would not be until the spring of 1918 that sinkings would fall below 300,000 tons a month, but the Allies had reversed the deadly trend of early 1917 and had won the Battle of the Atlantic.

**Citation:** "Battle of the Atlantic (World War I)." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=79356>>.

## ***Battle of Cantigny***

May 28–31, 1918

The small farming village of Cantigny in the Picardy region of France about 50 miles northwest of Paris was the scene of America's first significant battle of World War I. In response to the German spring offensives of March 1918, the commander in chief of the Allied armies, General Ferdinand Foch, asked the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) commander, General John J. Pershing, to make his combat-ready divisions available to stem the tide. Pershing sent Major General Robert L. Bullard's 1st Division to the Cantigny sector in early April with instructions to prepare to conduct offensive operations. Initially, the division would be under the control of the Fifth French Army, which was in reserve.

As the division moved toward the front, it passed to the command of the French VI Corps. It finished taking up positions on 26 April, and General Bullard assumed responsibility for the sector the following day. There were no finished trenches, only foxholes, and headquarters was in caves and cellars. The sides exchanged heavy artillery fire; during this period the division took an average of 60 casualties daily from German indirect fire. Brigadier General Charles P. Summerall's division artillery fired as many as 30,000 shells a day.

During the night of 3–4 May, the 18th Infantry Regiment, quartered in the village of Villers-Tournelles, just west of Cantigny, was rendered ineffective by a bombardment of mustard gas and high-explosive shells. Nearly 900 men were incapacitated or killed. Major General Charles A. Vandenberg's French X Corps took over responsibility for the area from the VI Corps on 5 May.

Rehearsals on similar terrain in the rear, supported by the remainder of the division and French aircraft, tanks, and artillery, prepared the 28th Infantry Regiment to launch an assault on 28 May. A one-hour

period of artillery registration followed by a preliminary bombardment of the same length preceded the attack, at 6:45 AM. Much of the supporting French artillery was being withdrawn to meet an emergency in another sector even as the attack began. The enthusiastic American infantrymen swept through and beyond the village to the north and east with fewer than 75 casualties. Colonel Hanson E. Ely's 28th then awaited the expected German counterattacks and counterfire.

Soldiers of the German 82d Reserve Division, who had been pushed back, reacted violently to the repulse. Their commander had castigated them for losing the village; the result was repeated counterattacks and artillery fire that inflicted nearly 1,000 additional U.S. casualties in the next three days. It was an unforgiving battle initiation, but the Americans weathered it superbly.

General Bullard believed that the challenge of Cantigny had saved his division from the morale-sapping experience of trench-warfare training and the possibility of being forever employed under French or British command. General Vandenberg was effusive in his praise of the Americans, calling them the "men of Cantigny." General Pershing was pleased with the outcome and certain that questions about American leadership and organizational abilities had been answered.

**Citation:** "Battle of Cantigny." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.

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## *Battles of Château-Thierry and Belleau Wood*



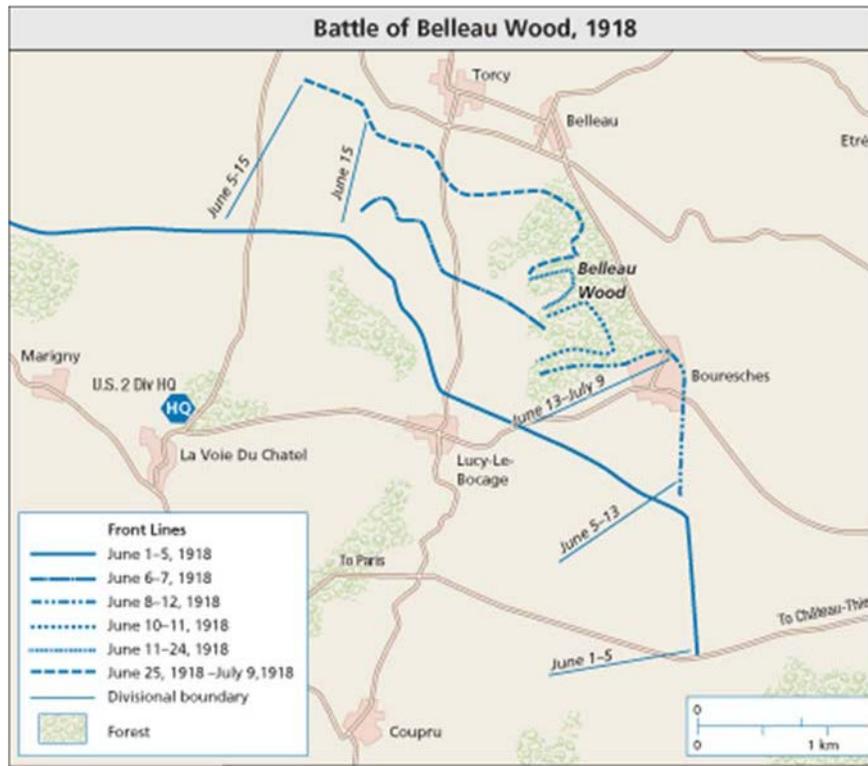
This painting by Marine Corps artist Tom Lovell was an attempt to capture the horror of combat in Belleau Wood.

May-June, 1918

During the spring of 1918 Quartermaster General of the German army general Erich Ludendorff launched a series of major offensives on the western front. Utilizing veteran troops shifted from the eastern front, Ludendorff hoped to win the war before U.S. forces could make an impact. The Ludendorff offensives achieved the furthest German advances since 1914. In hope of drawing off Allied reserves prior to another blow in Flanders, in May Ludendorff launched the Chemin des Dames offensive to secure high ground northeast of Paris. Startling German successes there led Ludendorff to continue the advance in the Aisne sector, between the cities of Soissons and Rheims.

On 31 May German troops reached the Marne River in the vicinity of Château-Thierry, less than 50 miles from Paris. The American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) commander, General John J. Pershing, offered Allied general in chief Marshal Ferdinand Foch American help to stem the tide. Only the U.S. 2d and 3d Divisions were positioned to provide immediate assistance, however.

On 31 May the 3d Division's 7th Machine Gun Battalion arrived at the Marne to help the French hold the critical town of Château-Thierry, astride the main highway to Paris. The remainder of the division's infantry regiments arrived soon thereafter by rail, relieving the battered French units that had held the position. After days of stiff combat, the 3d Division's spirited defense earned it the nickname "Rock of the Marne." Throughout the month of June the division fought a number of actions around Château-Thierry, continuing to hold the south bank of the Marne.



This map shows the changing front lines at Belleau Wood, France, in June 1918. The month before, German forces had been threateningly close to Paris, France, so American forces, led by General Pershing, arrived to support the French. The 4th Marine Brigade fought the Battle of Belleau Wood for nearly a month and suffered massive casualties, including the highest amount of marine losses in one day (June 6) up to that point. The battle ended with an Allied victory, however, helping turn the tide of war in their favor.

On 1 June, the 2d Division, with its attached 3d Infantry Brigade and 4th Marine Brigade, began to move into defensive positions west of

Château-Thierry. It also held against German attacks, and under French command the division counterattacked in a series of costly assaults through and around Belleau Wood. Belleau Wood was thought to be lightly defended, a mistake for which the Americans paid dearly. During three long weeks of fighting the 4th Marine Brigade fought a confused and bloody battle to seize the entire wood. Controversy continues over the strategic value of the area, but there is no question about the bravery of the marines. On 16 June the 7th Infantry Regiment of the 3d Division relieved the marines and continued the attacks for another week but still failed to displace the Germans. The marines returned to the cauldron on 22 June. Four days later, with additional French artillery support, the marines controlled Belleau Wood.

The battles around Château-Thierry and Belleau Wood not only helped to halt Ludendorff's offensive but initiated counterattacks that led to the general Allied counteroffensive, which would win the war by November 1918. The U.S. defense around Château-Thierry and subsequent counterattack in Belleau Wood signaled the beginning of the first real American influence on western front fighting.

**Citation:** "Battles of Château-Thierry and Belleau Wood." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016. <<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=79358>>.

## *Second Battle of the Marne*



French troopers under General Gouraud drive back the Germans with their machine guns amid the ruins of a cathedral near the Marne.

July 15-22, 1918

American units, under overall French command, made significant contributions to this Allied victory.

The battle developed out of a series of German offensives intended to defeat the Allies in the spring and summer of 1918. The Quartermaster General (chief of staff) of the German Army, General Erich Ludendorff, was the driving force behind the 1918 offensives, which alternated blows against the British and French sectors of the

front. After four such offensives, Ludendorff decided on an attack against the French on the Marne River front that would draw Allied reinforcements away from the British front in Flanders. The German attack consisted of offensives to the east and west of the city of Reims, with the aim of using the converging attacks to pinch off Allied forces near the city. All told, the Germans had 49 divisions available for the attack.

The Allies anticipated the German thrust and made their most extensive defensive preparations to date in the war. The Allied supreme commander, General Ferdinand Foch, wanted to commit a minimum of forces to the Allied defense in order to build a reserve to resume the offensive at the opportune moment. Overall, the Allied commander deployed 38 infantry divisions in the Marne sector. Although Foch was often at odds with General Henri Philippe Pétain, commander of the forces facing the German onslaught, the two agreed to a defensive concept that minimized the amount of forces in the first line of trenches. General Henri Gouraud's Fourth Army adopted this "defense in depth" to the east of Reims. On the western side of Reims the French Fifth Army under General Henri Berthelot and the French Sixth Army under General Jean Degoutte ignored this order and manned the forward positions in depth, hoping to use the river barrier to stop the German attack. The American 3d, 26th, 28th, and 42d Divisions, as well as the African-American 369th Regiment of the 93d Division, joined with the French in holding the front lines.

Taking advantage of excellent intelligence from air reconnaissance and German prisoners, the Allies preempted the German artillery barrage by one hour, hitting the German troops in their assembly areas. The German infantry then struggled forward on both sides of Reims. On the west, against Gouraud's defense in depth, the German attack gained the thinly manned first defensive line but then came to a halt against the main positions.

The German attack to the west of Reims had some limited success. In this sector, the American and French units suffered casualties

from the initial German barrage. Even so, they devastated the German attackers attempting to cross the Marne. The Germans penetrated the front in a few areas, but within 48 hours the German attack was a failure. The American 38th Infantry Regiment of the 3d Division earned its nickname "Rock of the Marne" for its stubborn defense along the Marne River.

The lack of German success led Ludendorff to cancel the offensive on 16 July, and the next day he traveled north to make final preparations for an offensive against the British. However, his plans were thwarted by an Allied counteroffensive that quickly followed the battle on the Marne.

Foch now employed the reserve he had gathered to attack the base of the German salient near Soissons. With the German attack clearly spent by 17 July, the highly anticipated Allied Aisne-Marne Counteroffensive began on 18 July, including the American 1st and 2d Divisions. The successful Allied defense in the Second Battle of the Marne and the subsequent counteroffensive ruined Ludendorff's plans for victory in the West in World War I.

**Citation:** "Second Battle of the Marne." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=79360>>.

## *Meuse-Argonne offensive*



The Meuse-Argonne region was a tangle of ravines, woods, dominating heights, and rock-bound citadels. Ideal for defense, it diminished the impact of the American attackers despite their eight-to-one numeric advantage.

September 26-November 11, 1918

On 26 September 1918 American forces began the Meuse-Argonne offensive, part of the larger Allied operation along the western front. The American objective was to drive German forces out of the Meuse-Argonne sector some 20 miles north of Verdun. General John J. Pershing commanded the American First Army of more than 1

million men and hoped to advance through approximately 10 miles of German defenses in a few days. The Germans stoutly defended their positions, and it took the Americans more than six weeks to clear the sector. It came at a high cost.

While the American First Army had been successful in its mid-September St. Mihiel offensive, French and British military leaders were not convinced that the Americans were ready to wage a major operation on their own. Pershing saw the Meuse-Argonne offensive as an opportunity to prove American Expeditionary Force (AEF) capabilities.

The Americans could not have picked a worse place to test their mettle. The Meuse-Argonne region contained significant natural defensive positions, which were fully exploited by the German defenders to build a massive defense in depth in what the Allies called the Hindenburg Line. It consisted of a series of heavily fortified positions, all carefully registered for artillery fire.

Because Pershing had insisted that the AEF could carry out an assault against Saint-Mihiel starting 15 September and still be ready to attack in the Meuse-Argonne sector at the end of the month, American forces faced a logistical nightmare. The best trained and most experienced American divisions had been in the vanguard of the Saint-Mihiel assault, but because of casualties, these divisions were not immediately available for the Meuse-Argonne offensive. For the initial assault Pershing would have to rely on AEF divisions that had little or no experience and were not fully trained. Preparing the troops for the assault was also a logistical nightmare. In a brilliant piece of staff work, Colonel George C. Marshall, made operations officer for First Army, planned the relocation of more than 400,000 troops and 900,000 tons of supplies 60 miles from the St. Mihiel front to the Meuse-Argonne, an operation carried out over three poorly maintained roads in rainy weather in just six days.



Ammunition and supplies move forward, while caissons and ambulances stream back from the Argonne battlefield.

The Meuse-Argonne offensive can be broken into three broad phases: the initial attack on 26 September, a second advance began on 4 October, and the final thrust started on 14 October. Nine generally inexperienced divisions spearheaded the initial attack along a 21-mile-long front and progressed slowly. They faced strong opposition, formidable terrain, and dreary weather. This combination limited the advance, and by the end of September the fighting had taken a heavy toll of the advancing divisions. Eight divisions, including several of the more experienced ones from the Saint-Mihiel offensive, renewed the general attack on 4 October with the

goal of breaking through the second German defensive belt. The third advance, beginning on 14 October, saw American forces break through the remaining German defense lines and reach terrain more suitable for Pershing's preferred open warfare tactics.

The AEF emerged from the Meuse-Argonne offensive severely bloodied but triumphant. Over the course of 47 days of combat, it had crushed German resistance in the sector, killed or wounded more than 100,000 German troops, taken more than 25,000 prisoners, and captured 874 guns. AEF casualties came to more than 26,000 dead and 95,000 wounded. The offensive came to an end on 11 November, when the German government agreed to an armistice.

The Meuse-Argonne offensive was the greatest campaign in which U.S. troops had ever fought. A total of 1,031,000 Allied troops participated, of which 135,000 were French and 896,000 American. Not until 1944 during World War II would its numbers be surpassed.

**Citation:** "Meuse-Argonne offensive." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=79361>>.

## *Saint-Mihiel offensive*



For four years the Germans held a bulge around the city of Saint-Mihiel that jutted into the Allied line. On September 12, 1918, after a long artillery barrage by American gunners, the U.S. First Army launched an attack on the German defenders.

September 12-16, 1918

The opportunity for a major U.S. operation arose from the successful Allied counteroffensive in July that reduced the Aisne-Marne salient. From that point forward, the initiative lay with the Allies under the overall command and direction of Marshal Ferdinand Foch of

France. General John J. Pershing's dream of an independent American field army became reality in July-August 1918, and he secured approval from Foch to reduce the Saint-Mihiel salient.

Colonel Hugh A. Drum, First Army chief of staff, directed planning. The salient, northwest of Toul near the right extremity of the Allied battle line, was oriented to the southwest with the village of Saint-Mihiel at its apex. It was 25 miles across its base and 16 miles deep into Allied territory, cutting the rail line from Verdun to Toul and from Paris to Nancy. This fortified triangular position had remained almost unchanged since 1914. Much to Pershing's dismay, Foch insisted on limiting the scope of the American attack in order to permit the Meuse-Argonne Offensive two weeks later.

The U.S. I and IV Corps launched the main attack against the south face of the salient on 12 September. Major General Hunter Liggett commanded I Corps, consisting of four divisions on the right of the First Army line. Major General Joseph Dickman's IV Corps, consisting of three divisions, operated on the left. Major General George H. Cameron's V Corps of two divisions and one brigade held the left (northern) end of the line; to its right was the French II Colonial Corps of three divisions. In all, 500,000 Americans and more than 110,000 French soldiers participated in the operation. Thousands of airplanes and tanks added to the combat power of First Army, and 2,900 guns laid down a four-hour barrage prior to the attack. A deception plan, the so-called Belfort Ruse, drew attention away from the Saint-Mihiel area.

Opposing this massive Allied force were nearly 14 German divisions. They were in the process of withdrawing to shorten their lines at the very time the Allies attacked.

After the preparatory barrage the infantry jumped off at 5:00 AM. Progress of the main attack against the south face of the salient was excellent, although at other points it was slower. The infantry units with engineer assistance had managed to get through the wire

entanglements quite effectively simply by moving over the entanglements where they were unable to cut them quickly. Prior to this innovation, attackers had relied on artillery preparation to cut the wire.

After the solid progress of the first day, Pershing directed that the units driving north and those driving east link up near Vigneulles to pinch off the nose of the salient. Thiaucourt fell to the combined efforts of the 2d and 89th Infantry Divisions at 11:00 AM on 12 September. Mont Sec in the IV Corps zone, on the left flank of the 1st Division, had threatened the advance because it dominated the entire area, but the fast pace of the attack put the Americans beyond the hill. By noon on the 13th, about 15,000 Germans and 400 guns had been captured. Allied casualties at that point were about 5,000. By the 15th, the salient was occupied by Allied troops, and the campaign was concluded on the 16th. In all, the First Army incurred about 7,000 casualties while capturing 16,000 Germans and 443 guns.

By all measures the reduction of the salient was a successful operation. The AEF had proved its worth in battle. Foch rejected Pershing's plan to continue the offensive toward Metz, and 10 days later these same forces were relocated and launched the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

**Citation:** "Saint-Mihiel offensive." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.

<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=79362>.

## ***Battle of Vaux***

July 1, 1918

A German offensive launched on 27 May 1918 had broken the Allied lines and advanced to Château Thierry, 60 miles from Paris. The Allies committed their reserves, including American units, and by 3 June had brought the German attack to a halt. Counterattacks by the U.S. 2d Division, which consisted of the 4th Marine Brigade and 3d Army Brigade, began on 6 June. By the 25th, the marines had driven the Germans from Belleau Wood, while the 3d Brigade, under Brigadier General Edward Lewis, had advanced toward the village of Vaux, about two miles to the southeast. Lewis's troops entrenched west of the village and carried out patrol actions. During the night of 23–24 June, the brigade suffered more than 400 casualties in a gas shell bombardment.

The German lines around Vaux formed a wedge protruding into the 3d Brigade's front. On 25 June, the French III Corps, under which 2d Division was operating, ordered the capture of Vaux to straighten the lines and acquire stronger defensive positions on the high ground east of the town.

Vaux, consisting of 82 stone buildings, had been abandoned by its 250 inhabitants. Through ground and aerial observation, prisoner interrogations, and reports from refugees, U.S. officers were able to plot the village and its defenses in detail, which greatly aided the attack. Vaux and the surrounding area were held by the German 402d Regiment, supported by machine guns, mortars, and artillery. The defenders were partially entrenched but had not completed work on their positions. The plan of attack called for 2d Battalion of 9th Infantry Regiment to advance on Vaux from the southwest while 3d Battalion, 23d Infantry Regiment, moved from the east.

At 5:00 AM on 1 July, artillery preparation began. It continued throughout the day; by afternoon, Vaux had been reduced to rubble.

The bombardment peaked at 5:00 PM as the infantry moved into attack position. German artillery fire, which had been sporadic during most of the day, became heavy from 4:00 to 5:30 PM, especially in the 9th Infantry sector.

Just before 6:00 PM, Allied artillery opened a rolling barrage, and moments later the American infantry advanced behind the wave of shellfire with drill-ground precision. Some Germans fought from Vaux's cellars, and machine gun fire slowed the Americans on the right, but the bombardment had broken the defenders into isolated groups, and resistance was quickly overcome. Within one hour the town had been cleared of Germans and the important high ground beyond it was taken in what American Expeditionary Force (AEF) commander General John Pershing termed "a brilliantly executed operation." A supporting French attack on the American right, however, had been halted after a short advance. In the predawn hours of 2 July, German reserves counterattacked but were easily repulsed.

German casualties in the battle were approximately 300 killed and more than 600 captured; American casualties were fewer than 200. Over the next several days, the 2d Division consolidated its position, but made no further advance. On 9 July it was relieved by the U.S. 26th Division.

**Citation:** "Battle of Vaux." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=79363>>.

## *Battle of the Atlantic, 1917–1918*



An aerial naval observer comes down from a balloon after a U-boat-scouting tour on the Atlantic Coast.

The Allies were pleased with the energy America was putting into its mobilization in the spring of 1917. However, an army in North America was of no use to them if the kaiser made good his promise to block the Atlantic sea lanes. Germany was counting on its U-boats to sink American troopships before they could land in Europe. Unless the battle of the seas was won, the war on land would be lost.

An effective antisubmarine tactic was the convoy. In a convoy, the most important vessels, the loaded troop transports, were surrounded by smaller, fast-moving combat ships called destroyers. Destroyers were designed and equipped to attack submerged submarines.

Also, by sailing on the outside of the convoy, a destroyer could, if necessary, block a torpedo with its own hull. The idea was that it was better to lose a destroyer than a huge transport with its tons of supplies and many hundreds of soldiers.

Because the naval war was to be directed against submarines, the navy suspended the building of battleships. Instead, it planned construction of 250 more destroyers. It also planned to build 400 smaller boats called submarine chasers.

American scientists developed simple underwater listening devices, the forerunner of today's sonar. Munitions experts developed effective depth charges. These were canisters of TNT that could be hurled into the water from the deck of a destroyer and set to explode at various depths.

Many of the new ships were still under construction when the war ended. Even so, the navy by then had 834 combat vessels on convoy duty. The overall strength of the U.S. Navy in 1918 reached some 2,000 ships and 533,000 men.

The first U.S. Navy vessels to see wartime service were 34 destroyers sent to Queenstown, Ireland, in May 1917 and stationed there. From this base they went out on convoy duty.

In November 1917 two of the destroyers from Queenstown forced the surrender of the German submarine *U-58*. In most cases, however, destroyers fired their deck guns and dropped depth charges until they thought their prey was sunk. But there was never any certainty that an enemy sub had been destroyed. Sailors could only search the waves for floating bits of debris or an oil slick, which they optimistically interpreted as another U-boat sent to the bottom of the ocean.

One seaman, William Duke, Jr., described his experience on a cruise in December 1917:

We were caught in a gale . . . and the seas were breaking over us. We were crawling around on deck . . . looking for a hatch cover that had become unfastened. We suddenly discovered that six depth charges had become unloosed and were lurching about, butting the bulkworks with every roll of the ship.

These depth charges are controlled by the paying out of wire and when a certain amount becomes uncoiled, they automatically explode. As no man knew how much the wire had become unmeshed, we all had to work fast, heaving them overboard. They went 'pop, pop, pop' as quickly as champagne corks at the French Ball. How we ever escaped blowing off our own stern is still regarded as a miracle by us all.

A little later they reached the spot where a U-boat had surfaced and was firing its deck gun at a sailing vessel. As Duke's destroyer approached, the submarine submerged.

We were soon amid the rushing of turbulent water that is caused by a sub directly after submerging. We let go one [of the remaining depth charges] set to explode at about 80 feet deep . . . We were soon rewarded by seeing the color of the water change [to black] in the immediate vicinity of the explosion.

Duty on convoy destroyers was characterized by days and days of boredom. Such days could be broken at any second by moments of tense, heart-stopping excitement at the appearance of an enemy submarine or torpedo trail.

Yet even the quiet times could be very unpleasant. In rough seas, seamen could sleep only by bracing themselves in their bunks. Men on duty became exhausted from constant holding on to lines or ladders. Then there was the danger of the ship capsizing in the heavy swell.

Wind, rain, and cold added to the sailors' discomfort. The winter of 1917-18 was a particularly bitter one on the North Atlantic. The navy vessels steamed into port looking more like icebergs than ships.

Life ashore at Queenstown was a relief, but not without its troubles. The American sailors were not always on the best of terms with the Irish at the nearby town of Cork. The assistant secretary of the navy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, went to visit the base. Years later, when he was president, he recalled:

The young ladies [of Cork] . . . preferred the American boys and, of course, the young gentlemen of Cork didn't like that . . . They staged a raid on our seamen. There being about 1,000 civilians, they drove our men back to the train. [The sailors] came back with a good many broken heads. Liberty [off-base passes] . . . was suspended until the Mayor of Cork gave assurance that the town people would behave better next time.



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The United States entered World War I in spring 1917, news that greatly cheered beleaguered Allied forces. Germany, however, aimed to foil plans by sinking American ships before their arrival in Europe. The U.S. Navy's effort focused on the safe transport of troops and supplies to Allied ports. This map shows the location of

U.S. naval bases throughout Europe between 1917 and 1918, as well as the type of resources—battleships and submarines, for example—some featured.

Roosevelt also remembered inspecting one of the machine bays aboard the USS *Melville*. He noticed a large canvas covering something. Beneath the canvas Secretary Roosevelt found "the finest assortment of brass knuckles and pieces of lead pipe that you ever saw." He turned to a large redheaded chief petty officer by the name of Flanagan and asked him what they were for. Flanagan saluted and said: "Sir, that's for the next liberty trip to Cork, damn these Irish."

Not all navy ships were on convoy duty. There were a number of battleships that joined the British blockade against the German fleet. For American seamen, life on the huge battleships not only was considerably more comfortable, it offered less opportunity for excitement. There was little chance that the German warships, now outnumbered two to one, would appear.

Another sort of duty was aboard minelaying ships operating out of Scotland. Their mission was to lay a field of mines from Scotland all the way across the North Sea to Norway (about the same distance as from New York City to Washington, D.C.). This was to be strictly an American project. In all, the navy laid 70,000 mines (each with 300 pounds of TNT), which blew up at least eight submarines.

Minelaying also had little excitement or glory, but it was hard work. There were dangers, too. In rough weather there was the risk of hitting a mine already laid. A ship might suffer, as one seaman put it, "some of our own particular brand of punishment."

Life on a submarine chaser was no less hazardous, but somewhat more exciting. American submarine chasers mainly patrolled waters in the Mediterranean Sea. They took part in many submarine hunts. According to one skipper, whose boat was stationed at the Greek island of Corfu: "Words cannot express the life on the chasers. . . ."

They are small but mighty. They ride worse than a horse or a mule and rock and roll like a cradle."

Life was even more uncomfortable aboard the fairly crude and fragile American submarines. They were used for the treacherous and difficult work of counter-submarine warfare.

The navy had many tasks. They all led to one purpose-getting transports and merchant ships past the lurking U-boats to the European harbors. In this way the navy played a vital role in the war effort.

**Citation:** "Battle of the Atlantic, 1917–1918." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=59980>>.

## *Argonne Battlefront*



Pershing shifted more than 800,000 troops to the Argonne-Meuse region, all under the cover of darkness, in preparation for a huge Allied push scheduled to begin September 26, 1918.

After the mop-up at Saint-Mihiel, only 12 days remained for General Pershing to get his forces on the starting line for the huge Allied push to begin September 26. American troops would take part all along the line. The U.S. Ninety-first Division would fight with the Belgian army in the Ypres sector under the command of King Albert. Two more U.S. divisions would be part of a huge British effort on the

Somme and another two (including the Second Division) would participate under the French army.

The big show for Pershing and the newly formed First American Army would be in the Meuse-Argonne region, a few miles north of Verdun. The jump-off line extended 24 miles from the Meuse River across to and through the Argonne Forest.

The movement of tremendous amounts of men and equipment had to be made in secrecy. This meant shifting more than 800,000 troops, all under the cover of darkness so as not to be detected. Marshal Foch doubted that the Americans would be able to pull it off.

There were only three main roads, all with deep ruts. Down these mud roads, a seemingly endless convoy of French trucks, driven by sleep-deprived Vietnamese, crawled along by night-without lights. The cramped Americans they carried were tormented by cold, rain, mosquitoes, and exhaust fumes. The men were so closely packed they could not sleep.

Despite the difficulties, the Americans kept on schedule. The U.S. Army even managed to get in place a day before the earliest date that Foch thought possible. Evidence suggests that the Germans were not aware of the move.

Yet Pershing was worried. In order to meet Foch's deadline, he had put untried divisions on the primary points of attack. So limited was the experience of these green troops that they could hardly be classified as soldiers. Winston Churchill would later write that the Americans were "half trained, half organized, with only their courage, their numbers and their magnificent youth behind their weapons."

Of the nine divisions taking part in the opening assault, only two had combat experience (one was the veteran Twenty-eighth "Iron"

Division). Along this Argonne section was the Seventy-seventh Division, made up of draftees from New York City.

Each doughboy carried 200 rounds of ammunition, two cans of corned beef, six boxes of hardtack (Army biscuits), and a one-quart canteen. Many of the novice troops put wine in their canteens instead of water. They had no veterans around to warn them that in the heat of battle wine was likely to turn a man's stomach as well as increase his dehydration. Later, men who should have been busy fighting the Germans would be busy throwing up.

On September 25, the eve of battle, the Americans waited silently in their positions. It rained softly. According to one infantry private from Mississippi, it was "as though the heavens were weeping over the sacrifice of so many lives that was so soon to be made."

The Americans could not have faced a more challenging obstacle. For hundreds of years, the Meuse-Argonne region had stood as a natural barrier between French kings and German princes. It was a tangle of ravines, woods, dominating heights, and rock-bound citadels. It was ideal for defense.

For four years, the Germans had been improving what nature started. They built a thick belt of defensive earthworks strengthened by wire, steel, and concrete. Its three main trench lines-named after three fabled witches of a Wagnerian opera-were deep and elaborate. The German trenches even had wooden beds and electric lights.

Ammunition and supplies move forward, while caissons and ambulances stream back from the Argonne battlefield.

It was Belleau Wood all over again, but on a much larger scale. One American general said that it made the Virginia forest where Civil War generals Grant and Lee fought the Battle of the Wilderness look



like a park. Pershing, however, commanded 12 times as many troops as Grant did at that battle in 1864, used 10 times as many cannon and had more ammunition than the Union army used during the whole Civil War.

Following a three-hour bombardment by 2,700 guns, at 5:30 AM on September 26, 1918, the Americans began their assault. Despite an eight-to-one numerical superiority, the advance began to bog down after about a mile. Evening fell with the troops five miles short of the first day's target. The offensive turned into stagnation the second day, and as September ended the advance ground to a halt. By this time, however, more veteran divisions were available to hurl into the attack.

Foot by foot the attack continued. Through rain and sleet, the soldiers inched their way up the treacherous landscape under constant enemy fire. They crawled through the clinging wire on whose rusty barbs pieces of cloth and flesh would remain. They fell into pits and were impaled on spikes that the Germans had cleverly set up for that purpose.

Keeping the troops supplied was also becoming a problem. As the soldiers advanced past the Germans' first line of defense, they left behind them a four-year-old no-man's-land (the same field the battle of Verdun had been fought on). It was a veritable lunar landscape over which serviceable roads would have to be built before supplies could be brought up.

Along with the mud and entanglements, there were mine craters 100 feet wide and 40 feet deep. One soldier described them as "wounds where the very bowels of the earth had been torn out . . . Imagine the ocean at its roughest and then imagine it instantly turned to clay." The time it took to reestablish supply lines gave the Germans the chance to reinforce the sector with more troops.

Meanwhile, the Manhattan men of the Seventy-seventh Division were learning that the Argonne was a long way from Central Park. Yet they pressed on through the forest, meeting fierce resistance every step of the way. Leading the way was the First Battalion of the 308th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Maj. Charles Wittlessey.

On October 1 the battalion made its way into a small valley with steep, wooded banks, about a half-mile in front of the rest of the division. Sensing a trap, Wittlessey ordered his men back across the brook. He was too late. As the men crossed an old footbridge, German machine guns opened up. The battalion was trapped in the valley.

The Meuse-Argonne region was a tangle of ravines, woods, dominating heights, and rock-bound citadels. Ideal for defense, it



diminished the impact of the American attackers despite their eight-to-one numeric advantage.

One of Wittlessey's messengers made it to the rear to request assistance. The 307th Regiment was sent, but only one company made it through. The rest were lost in the dark forest or driven off by enemy fire. By morning (October 2) Wittlessey and more than 600 men were completely surrounded.

Throughout the day German mortars, grenades, and snipers took their toll. There was no way for divisional headquarters to contact the First Battalion. Wittlessey, however, had a few homing pigeons that he could send to let them know he and his men had not surrendered.

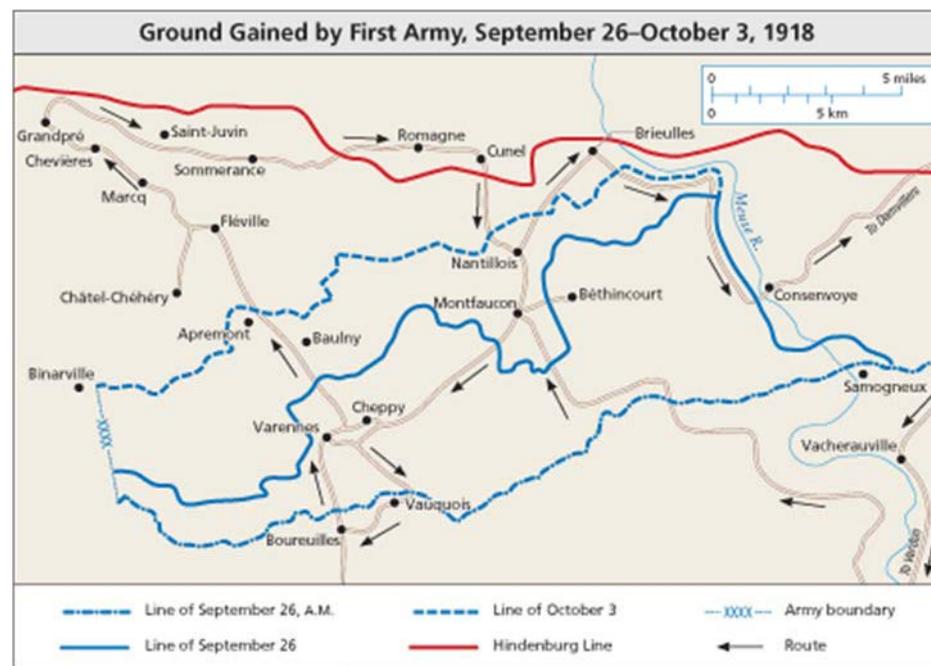
The next day, October 3, was spent fending off German assaults. By noon, the last of the food had been eaten. The only source of water, a spring, had a German machine gun trained on it. There were many wounded but there was no medical officer. All the bandages had been used up.

By the morning of October 4, fewer than 500 men were still alive. Unable to get infantry in to relieve the First Battalion, the Seventy-seventh Division Command decided to saturate the German positions with artillery fire. But the American artillery, which had only an approximate idea of the battalion's position, dropped its shells on Wittlesley's men.

Wittlesley released his last homing bird, his only hope. The slate-colored carrier pigeon was named Cher Ami. (*Cher ami* is a common French opening for a personal letter and means "dear friend.") The pigeon instinctively flew toward the American lines.

The final Allied offensive during World War I was the Meuse-Argonne offensive, beginning September 26, 1918. The land was notoriously difficult to fight on, and Germany had built a complicated and strong defensive system known as the Hindenburg Line. This map shows the movement during the first phase of the offensive, when the Allies suffered major losses due to lack of experience, training, and heavy German artillery in the area. The Allies eventually won, however, and an armistice was signed on November 11, 1918.

Along the way a bullet crashed into Cher Ami's head, tearing out its left eye. Then flaming shrapnel tore into its chest and fractured its breastbone. A third hit ripped away its lower right leg. Yet, miraculously, the pigeon kept flying. Wittlesley's message was still there, hanging from the torn ligaments of Cher Ami's remaining leg.



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The message finally reached the American artillery. It read: "For heaven's sake, stop it."

The shelling had lasted over an hour and caused at least 30 casualties. It also tore away underbrush that hid the doughboys from enemy snipers. By October 6 only 275 men were left. The Germans urged Wittlesley and his men to surrender. They refused.

Rain at least provided drinking water. The men resorted to eating plant roots and even the bird seed left by the pigeon handler. Allied aircraft dropped food and other supplies, but most of it landed on the German side. German snipers laid out the food packages, killing any American who reached for the bait.

On October 7, weak from hunger and exposure to the cold, and with almost no ammunition left, the men settled into another hopeless

night. Then, a little past 7 PM, three companies of the 307th Infantry finally cut their way through.

On October 8, the 194 survivors of what became known as the Lost Battalion left the valley. On that same day in another part of the forest, Alvin C. York in just 15 minutes made his reputation as the most famous American hero of World War I.



Sergeant Alvin York of the 328th Infantry became a hero at Argonne. Part of a 16-man patrol sent to knock out several enemy machine-gun nests behind the German lines, York shot 17 attacking German soldiers with exactly 17 shots.

York was part of a 16-man patrol sent to knock out several enemy machine-gun nests holding a wooded slope. The patrol quietly slipped behind the German lines. In a small clearing it surprised a German battalion commander and a group of soldiers. Thinking the patrol was part of a large force of Americans, the Germans threw up their hands in surrender.

The German soldiers on the next rise realized the American force was small and opened fire. Six men of the American squad were immediately killed and three more wounded, including the officer in charge.

The captured Germans lay down on the ground while the remaining seven men of the patrol took cover behind some trees. The Germans, now shooting from two sides, created a crossfire, which hit not only the Americans, but also those Germans who had already surrendered and their own troops firing from the opposite side.



After capturing territory from the Germans, American infantrymen of the First Army take a rest in the battle-scarred Argonne Forest.

The American patrol returned fire and killed several Germans. York then took command of the patrol. He ordered them to watch the prisoners while he moved out to attack the other enemy positions. York had grown up in the mountains of Tennessee hunting small game and was a crack shot. He now put his marksmanship to work.

One by one York shot the Germans in the first position with his rifle. Then another group charged him from the side with bayonets. Instinctively York pulled out his Colt .45 automatic pistol and aimed. He intentionally fired at the men in the rear of the oncoming squad

so that the ones in front would keep charging. He worked his shots forward until he hit the last man.

In all, York shot 17 German soldiers with exactly 17 shots. York and the rest of the patrol then marched the prisoners, including a major, back to the American lines. Along the way, the captured major ordered more Germans to surrender. The seven Americans got back safely with their three wounded comrades and 132 German prisoners. York was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

There were many heroes of the Argonne, but Alvin York was the most famous. Perhaps this was because he symbolized America's citizen soldiers. York was a conscientious objector—that is, he thought all war was bad and had said that fighting in one was against his religious beliefs. When he was drafted, he entered the army only after "a lot of prayer and soul searching." York did what he had to do. He became a legend, but had no pride in what he had done.

The day after the fight, he wrote in his journal: "I didn't want to kill a whole heap of Germans, I didn't hate them, but I done it just the same." In World War II, York would serve his country again as a counselor for young men who wished to be declared conscientious objectors.

On October 10 the Americans drove the last Germans from the Argonne. The British and French drives farther north had cracked key German defensive lines. It was becoming clear to the Germans that the war was lost. Germany's diplomats began to probe for peace.

**Citation:** "Argonne Battlefield." *America at War Online*. Infobase

## *Battle of Belleau Wood, 1918*



On June 6, 1918, a brigade of U.S. Marines received orders to take control of Belleau Wood as part of a counterattack against a bold German advance.

The French Sixth Army now planned a major counterattack to begin the morning of June 6. The point of the German spearhead was a quarter-mile east of the marine position in a kidney-shaped patch of trees called Belleau Wood.

The marine brigade was ordered to take control of Belleau Wood while the 167th French Division seized an expanse of wheat fields on the high ground northwest of the wood. French intelligence assured the American commander that it was "lightly held and you should have no trouble capturing it."

The Germans assigned Hans Otto Bischoff, a 46-year-old major, to direct the defense of Belleau Wood. He spent three days carefully preparing his positions. Major Bischoff had turned it into a huge machine-gun nest. The marines soon called it "Hellwood."

In all, Bischoff had carefully positioned 200 machine guns. He arranged the machine-gun nests in such a way that if one was captured, it would be exposed to flanking fire by two others. There were also three elaborate lines of trenches, protected by barbed wire, mortar teams, and sharpshooters in rifle pits.

Bischoff had done his job well, but his troops were not in the best shape. For months they had been surviving on a diet of black bread, barley, and dried vegetables. Many were ill with the flu and dysentery. Nevertheless, he believed his Germans would stop anything the Americans could throw against them.

The French 167th Division attacked on schedule. The troops advanced well and drove the Germans from several entrenched positions. However, the French artillery did not lengthen its range fast enough. Its barrage fell on its own advancing troops and caused

many casualties. Getting hit from behind by their own guns and in front by the enemy proved too much for the French infantry. The shaken, confused Frenchmen retreated to their start line.

The marines had difficulties of their own. A company under Capt. Orland Crowther was ordered to take Hill 142, north of the wood, to protect the left flank. They were pinned down for hours by heavy machine-gun fire. Finally, they rushed forward along with another company and took the north slope just in time to repulse a series of German counterattacks.

The last of these counterattacks was stopped singlehandedly by Gunnery Sgt. Charles Hoffman. He spotted a dozen enemy soldiers crawling through the bushes with several light machine guns. He charged down the slope with a yell, bayoneted two Germans, and drove off the rest. Though badly wounded, he survived and received the Medal of Honor, America's highest award for bravery in combat. It was the first awarded to the Second Division.

Captain Crowther himself caught a bullet in the throat and was killed. His company, however, took Hill 142 as ordered. The cost was heavy. Ninety percent of the officers and 50 percent of the men were killed or wounded. It was a forecast of things to come.

At 3:45 PM Colonel Catlin, commander of the Sixth Marine Regiment, looked through his binoculars to watch one of his battalions, under Maj. Benjamin Berry, move out into the wheat fields. Four hundred yards beyond loomed the dark mass of Belleau Wood. "It was a moment fit to shake nerves of steel," wrote Catlin, "like entering a dark room filled with assassins."

Berry's men faced an almost impossible task. They crossed the field, the sun gleaming off their bayonets, the air sweet with the smell of trampled wheat. They were soon being cut down by Major Bischoff's veteran gunners. There were many acts of valor, but the marines were pinned down until nightfall when they crawled back to the

trench. With 60 percent casualties, including Major Berry, not one of them had reached the wood.

Colonel Catlin's second battalion, under Maj. Berton Sibley, fared somewhat better. Some were pinned by heavy fire, but the rest moved steadfastly forward and plunged into the wood.

Raising his binoculars again, Catlin grinned as the first wave of marines disappeared among the trees. At that moment a bullet pierced his right lung and came out beneath his shoulder blade. Later, while recovering in Paris, Catlin told a visitor: "It's my own fault. I shouldn't have been so close to the front in a first-class war."

In the wood, Major Bischoff's machine guns covered every section with a gauntlet of fire. The marines learned that the only effective tactic was to work around behind a nest and bomb it with hand grenades. Then they would rush forward and kill or capture the crew.

Bischoff's clever deployment made this deadly strategy work. Every time Sibley's men took a machine-gun nest, they were pinned down by flanking fire from another.

One squad of marines took a German nest only to get fired on by another nest. The marines took cover behind some boulders, where they brought the surviving crew, then left one man behind to guard the captured Germans. The rest of the squad sneaked around the flank of the second nest. They captured its whole crew. Meanwhile, the prisoners at the first nest had killed the guard and started firing at the second nest. The marines bayoneted the crew of the second nest, then recaptured the first nest and killed its crew too.

Between attacks Red Cross volunteers on both sides helped the wounded. No one fired on them at first. Then some marines spotted a German first aid team carrying a machine gun and some ammo boxes on a stretcher. "It looked like a wounded man with his legs drawn

up," recalled an officer, "until a gust of wind flipped back the blanket covering the stretcher."

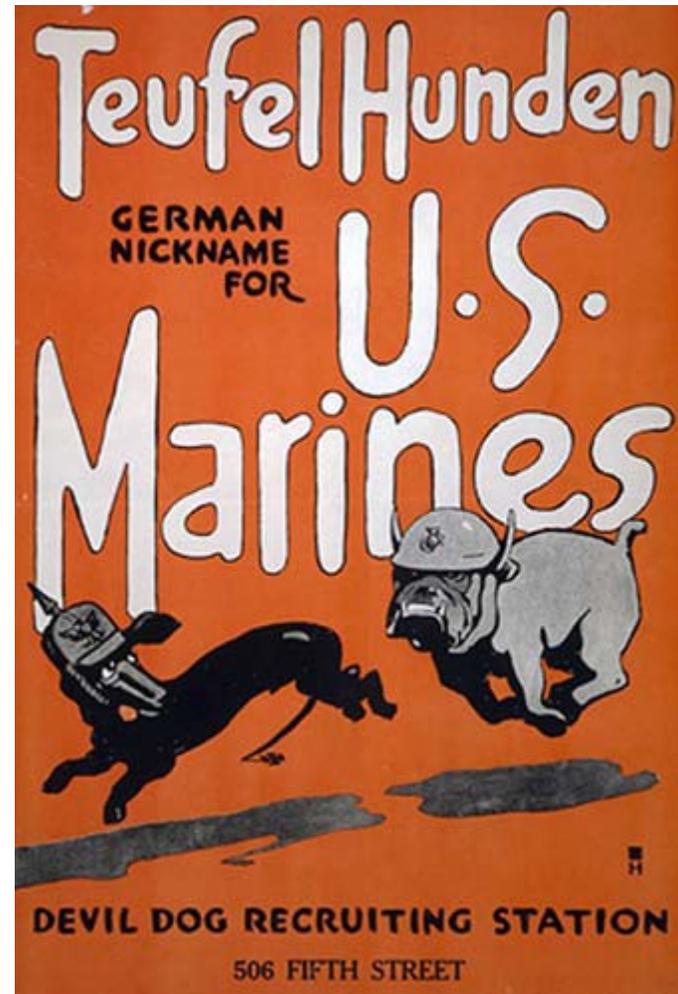
After that, it was hard on the medics and the wounded; it was hard on everyone. An unmailed letter, found later on the body of a German corporal and addressed to the corporal's father, told of the horror from the German perspective. "The Americans are savages," it said. "They kill everything that moves." This brutal fighting made the Germans call the marines *Teufel Hunden*- "Devil Dogs"-a nickname that sticks to this day.

The *New York Times* reported that on that first day the marines charged forward, crying "Remember the *Lusitania*." This seems an unlikely battle cry. No eyewitness accounts confirm it. Several accounts do mention a salty marine sergeant yelling "Come on! Do you want to live forever?"

Darkness fell and the scene became a nightmare of yells, groans, cries for help, machine-gun bursts, and rifle fire. By 9 PM Sibley had lost half his command, and the rest were held up at German strong points. He passed the word to dig in and wait for daybreak.

The commanding officer of the marine brigade, Brig. Gen. James G. Harbord, reflected on the day's events. The marines had suffered 1,100 casualties and captured only the southern lobe of the wood. The Germans still firmly held the northern and central parts. Yet Harbord's troops had fought bravely and well, and at least they had a toehold.

It was apparent to Harbord that, as he later wrote, "More than Belleau Wood was at stake, more than standing between the invader and Paris. It was a struggle for psychological mastery. . . . The stage was small, but the audience was the world of 1918."



The "Devil Dogs" of Belleau Wood provided rich poster material and attracted a surge of recruits.

The German High Command had similar thoughts and was paying close attention to the marines. To abandon Belleau Wood would

mean to give the Americans a "cheap success." International newspapers trumpeted that *one* brigade of Yanks was enough to stop the German attack. The German High Command felt that this might have serious consequences on the morale of the Central Powers and on the continuation of the war. They sent a crack division of Prussian Guard Infantry to reinforce the sector.

Thus both sides put more importance on the battle than the on the disputed territory. Prestige was involved, a pivot on which great events can turn.

The next morning, June 8, Sibley's men renewed the advance. Losses were heavy. One company lost all its officers. General Harbord decided they had taken all the punishment they could stand. He ordered Sibley to pull out and take cover in a gully at the south edge of the wood.

Army artillery took over now. The plan was to pulverize the enemy defenses with an intense barrage, then send in fresh marine reserves to sweep the wood clean. On June 9, the artillery laid down 34,000 high-explosive shells. Most of the shells, however, had contact fuses that exploded when they hit the tops of the trees. The trenches beneath them were showered with branches and shrapnel, but the barrage caused relatively few casualties. When it was over, the Germans popped up behind their guns once more.

The marines advanced. A private wrote: "We moved into the tree line. I saw blood-stained bodies everywhere, some missing an arm or leg. My knees felt weak and I wanted to sit down. . . . I guessed we were in Belleau Wood."

Three days of hard fighting gained some ground, but the enemy could not be dislodged from the wood. On June 13, the Germans counterattacked along the whole sector. In Belleau Wood, their main assault fell on Colonel Wise's battalion, the one that had first halted the Germans on the Paris highway 10 days earlier.

The battalion endured murderous attacks, but held on. Wise himself had a narrow escape while giving instructions to two of his officers. A shell burst overhead. It killed the officer on his right and incapacitated the one on his left. The shell fragments ripped through Wise's jacket but did not touch him.



This painting by Marine Corps artist Tom Lovell was an attempt to capture the horror of combat in Belleau Wood.

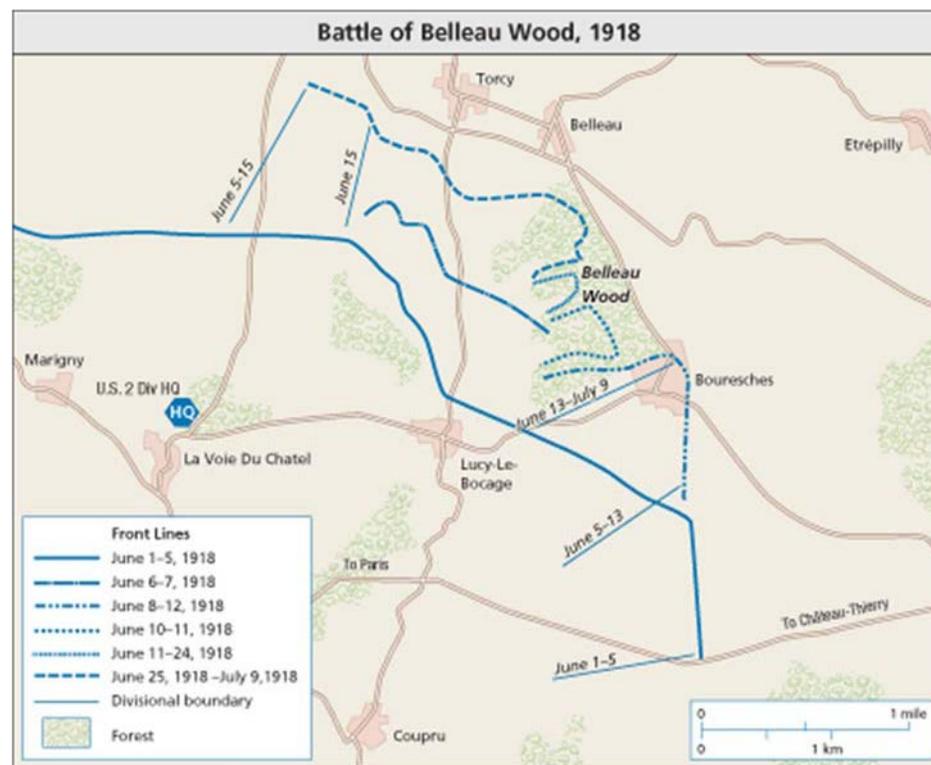
That night, General Harbord sent another battalion, under Maj. Thomas Halcomb, to relieve Wise's hard-pressed men. It was unfortunate timing. As Halcomb's men started into the southern part of the wood, the Germans dropped 7,000 mustard gas bombs and many high explosive shells that also contained a vomiting gas.

Gas masks compounded the darkness and fog so that the men could not see anything. They stumbled through the blackness, bounding off trees and falling into shell holes.

Of Halcomb's 800 men, only 300 survivors drifted in to relieve Colonel Wise. "I did not consider that they were sufficient to relieve me," reported Wise, "and remained in position."

On June 15, the U.S. Army took over the fight. Harbord's marine brigade was relieved by the Seventh Infantry Brigade of the Third U.S. Division, which had not yet seen action. The marine brigade had been cut down to less than half its original strength.

The next morning Colonel Wise reviewed his tattered battalion. He wrote: "It was enough to break your heart. I had left . . . on May 31 with 965 men and 26 officers. Now before me stood 350 men and six officers."



This map shows the changing front lines at Belleau Wood, France, in June 1918. The month before, German forces had been threateningly close to Paris, France, so American forces, led by General Pershing, arrived to support the French. The 4th Marine Brigade fought the Battle of Belleau Wood for nearly a month and suffered massive casualties, including the highest amount of marine losses in one day (June 6) up to that point. The battle ended with an Allied victory, however, helping turn the tide of war in their favor.

The French High Command was pleased and impressed with the performance of the Second Division (to which the marines

belonged). They were not the only ones. On June 17, a copy of a German intelligence report (from a few days earlier) was captured. It contained this excerpt:

The American 2nd Division may be rated as a very good division. [In particular] the various attacks by both of the Marine regiments were carried out with vigor and regardless of losses. The effect of our firearms did not . . . check the advance of their infantry. The nerves of the Americans are still unshaken. . . . The personnel may be considered excellent. They are healthy, strong and physically well-developed men. The spirit of the American troops is fresh and one of careless confidence.

Belleau Wood stood as the first testing ordeal between Germans and Americans on an otherwise insignificant wood patch. Without roads or rail lines, it was a springboard to nowhere, ground that neither side needed.

The Germans were foolish to let things happen the way they did. They placed the highest stakes on a local cockfight, and had taken on the wrong men. The marine brigade was one of the most determined and aggressive units on the western front.

The Germans were not licked yet. The Seventh U.S. Infantry launched two assaults against Major Bischoff's men. Both were repulsed. On June 22, the army gave Belleau Wood back to the marines. A final assault on June 25 (led by Major Berry's old battalion) at last broke the enemy line. The marines cleared the wood completely, bagging 500 German prisoners in the process.

The marines had not won the war, but they had stopped the Germans in their tracks. For nearly four years the French army had been solely responsible for the Allies' right flank. At last, the French were not alone. The Yanks were in action.

**Citation:** "Battle of Belleau Wood, 1918." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=59984>>.

## *U.S. Convoy to France*



American military vessels, such as this crowded troop transport ship, were subject to submarine attacks en route to Europe.

Before America's new army could fight in France, it had to cross an ocean. Troops from training camps across the country funneled into embarkation ports along the east coast. From New York, Boston, Norfolk, Charleston, and others, they set sail. They went on large, fast transports, and sometimes on old, slow tubs. Whatever the ship, it always sailed as part of a convoy, which steamed at the pace of the slowest ship.

Aboard the crowded ships, the men tried to stay above deck as much as they could. They amused themselves by playing cards and organizing wrestling matches. For most of them, it was their first time at sea. Many became seasick and some could hardly eat anything for the whole trip.

In more than one sense, enlisted personnel and their officers were literally in the same boat. As one recruit put it: "It gives the bucks [privates] a guilty joy to know that bars and stripes [of high rank] are no protection against seasickness. Another evidence of the democracy of our army is that it doesn't matter whether an officer or soldier goes overboard-the ship won't stop in either case."

Most trips were happily uneventful for the troops. But they always took precautions. Lifeboat drills were a daily exercise. After dark, no lights were allowed on deck; even smoking was prohibited. In danger zones, everyone slept in their clothes and life preservers.

Most of the troops believed that their passage would be a safe one. They put their trust in the new defensive tactics. The ships moved in a zigzag pattern, which made it harder for U-boats to aim their torpedoes. Ship hulls were painted with camouflage patterns that made them difficult to see clearly from submarine periscopes. Most of all, the men felt confident that the accompanying destroyers would keep them from harm.

There were many false alarms. Periscope sightings often turned out to be a piece of driftwood or a reflection on the water. But sometimes these "sub scares" were real submarines.

Just after dark, on February 5, 1918, a torpedo struck the troopship *Tuscania*. The 2,500 men on board scrambled to get on deck. Unlike the passengers of the *Lusitania*, these men had rehearsed many times for precisely this emergency. They carefully lowered the lifeboats and evacuated the rapidly sinking vessel in good order. Very few lives were lost.

Fortunately, and to the U.S. Navy's credit, the *Tuscania* was the only Europe-bound troop transport to be sunk. There were, however, a number of very close calls. In June 1918, the *Von Steuben* narrowly missed being sunk. The *Von Steuben* was one of a number of German ships, trapped in American ports since 1914, that the U.S. Navy promptly seized when Congress declared war.

The *Von Steuben's* lookout spotted the foamy white trail of a torpedo heading directly toward them. Within an instant, he alerted the bridge. The captain gave orders for evasive action. The crew, acting without hesitation or confusion, maneuvered the ship. The men held their breath as the torpedo skimmed by, missing the bow by a bare 20 feet.

The commander of convoy operations, Vice Admiral Albert Gleaves, commented later, "Here was a case where three brains acted quickly and in coordination, the lookout, the captain and the helmsman. The slightest mistake on the part of any one of the three would have resulted in the loss of the ship."

Priority was given to loaded troop transports. After their passengers and cargo were safely landed, convoys sometimes had to return to the United States without destroyer escorts. On May 30, 1918, the German submarine *U-90* sighted an unescorted convoy of four ships sailing back from France. The U-boat attacked. Three of the ships got away. The fourth and largest of the ships, the *President Lincoln*, sank after taking three torpedo hits.

Soon after, *U-90* surfaced and approached the survivors' rafts and lifeboats. The German skipper tried to find the ship's commander, Capt. P. W. Foote, but he had disguised himself as a sailor. The men assured the U-boat commander that Foote had gone down with the ship. Noticing the officer uniform of a Lieutenant Isaacs, the German skipper ordered him aboard, then submerged and sailed away.

The next morning, two U.S. destroyers arrived on the scene. Picking up the survivors was slow and risky work. A U-boat might be waiting nearby, using the lifeboats as bait for new victims. The rescue took four hours to complete. Only 26 men were lost out of the 785 that had been aboard.

Shortly after the last man was pulled out of the water one of the destroyers spotted *U-90's* periscope. The destroyers headed straight for the submarine at top speed and dropped depth charges where it was spotted.

Lieutenant Isaacs, prisoner aboard *U-90*, learned firsthand what it was like to be attacked by an American destroyer. "We felt depth bombs exploding all about us," he wrote months later, in an official report. "I counted 22 bombs in four minutes; five of them very close." The German skipper barely saved his vessel by quickly diving 200 feet, turning off the engines and "playing dead."

*U-90* returned to port in Wilhelmshaven, Germany. Lieutenant Isaacs was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp. After persistent effort he managed to escape and made his way to Switzerland. He was then brought to the British Admiralty in London, where he gave a full report about all that he had learned about the operation of U-boats.

In September 1918, a submarine torpedoed the crowded troop transport *Mount Vernon*. Only one torpedo hit, but it blew a 19-foot hole in the transport's side and flooded half the boiler rooms. The escorting destroyers first laid a massive screen of black smoke to hide the stricken vessel. Then they fanned out and began dropping depth charges.

Meanwhile, the *Mount Vernon* had all it could do to stay afloat. Sailors worked feverishly to stop the flooding and keep the remaining boilers going. The soldiers on board had work, too. They formed a bucket line and bailed out water for the next 18 hours until the ship finally reached port in France.

Experiences like these were exceptional on the seas. Only 71 of the more than 2 million American soldiers transported across the Atlantic in 1,142 troopship sailings were lost. Few troops encountered any hazard worse than seasickness.

The navy had achieved a miracle in the face of ever-present danger from beneath the waves. It assembled a "bridge of ships" that transported not only a huge army to France but also an average of four tons of supplies and equipment for each soldier. It won the Atlantic battle. This was an essential prelude to winning the great battles on the western front.

**Citation:** "U.S. Convoy to France." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=59981>>.

## *Allies Welcome American Troops*



General John "Black Jack" Pershing organized the American Expeditionary Force from scratch, one of the great feats of World War I.

The first American troops arrived in France on June 28, 1917. To the tired French people, exhausted by three years of attrition, these fresh young men brought promise and new hope.

The "doughboys," the nickname (of disputed origin) of the American soldiers, had come to fight on the side of liberty. Many thought it repayment of the debt owed to France for having helped their forebears win the American Revolution.

On July 4, 1917, the city of Paris threw a hearty welcome for the doughboys. During the celebration, an American colonel named C. E. Stanton uttered four words that were to stir both the French and American nations: "Lafayette, we are here." (Stanton was referring, of course, to the French general who fought for the United States during the Revolutionary War.)

These first men were the nucleus of what would become a huge army called the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). Gen. John "Black Jack" Pershing, of the Mexican expedition, was the man President Wilson chose to be commander in chief of the AEF.

Pershing was born in Missouri in 1860 into a family whose original German name was Pfoersching. In 1886 he graduated from the United States Military Academy (West Point) at the top of his class. While serving in the U.S. Cavalry, he fought in the last Indian wars of the American West.

In those days, promotions in rank were painfully slow. By his mid-thirties he was still a lieutenant. He considered leaving the army to become a lawyer. His good friend Charles Dawes, future vice president of the United States (1925-29), convinced Pershing to stick with the army a while longer. Neither of them could have dreamed that Pershing's army career would skyrocket him to international fame.

In 1898 Pershing fought in Cuba where he won the Silver Star. Next he went to the Philippines to help put down the Moro rebellion. Still only a captain, Pershing won the admiration of President Theodore Roosevelt, who sent him to act as an observer in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05.

Roosevelt rewarded Pershing in 1906 by elevating him four ranks to brigadier general. Pershing, only 46 years old, had been promoted ahead of 862 senior officers, creating considerable bitterness among his fellow officers for many years.

Pershing's devotion to duty helped him to weather personal hardship. The day he arrived in Texas to lead the Mexican expedition, he received the news that his wife and three small daughters had burned to death in a fire at the Presidio army base in San Francisco. Pershing went on with his mission and proved himself an able leader. When he returned, President Wilson made him a two-star general.

Wilson probably could not have made a better choice for commander of the AEF. Pershing was no great strategist and often lacked military wisdom. Yet, he had patience, emotional balance, and unshakable fortitude—important qualities if one is to shape an army. Pershing's organization of the AEF from scratch was one of the great feats of World War I.

Pershing was the picture-perfect image of an indomitable high commander. His height and rigid posture seemed tailor-made for monuments. He possessed a strength of character that inspired confidence in his troops as well as his political superiors in Washington.

Most of all, Pershing had the grit and determination to stand up to the Allied governments and their generals. France and Britain were not interested in an independent and untested U.S. Army. They needed men to bolster their thinned-out lines. They wanted to use American manpower to flesh out their depleted units.

Pershing said no. He was appalled by the callous disregard the Allied generals had for the lives of their troops. Casualties were just numbers to them. Pershing could not bear the thought of his men being dragged into some wasteful trench battle at the whim of foreign generals whom he considered to be incompetent strategists.

Not only was Pershing going to keep his army intact and independent, he also intended to keep it away from the fighting until he felt it was fully trained. The Allies constantly pressured him to commit his troops, ready or not. They even put severe pressure on

the American government to remove Pershing, but Wilson doggedly stuck by his general.

Pershing realized that the stateside training his men had received was inadequate for the kind of war that faced them at the front. New training areas were set up in the rear.

French troops, hardened veterans loaned to Pershing, became professors to the green (inexperienced) Americans. The French instructors could hardly believe how ill-trained the doughboys were. Yet, in time, they were amazed by the speed and dedication with which these same Americans applied their new training and tactics.

In early October, Pershing arranged with General Pétain, commander in chief of the French army, to have small American units go into the French line for 10 days at a time for the sake of experience. Through this rotation system, most doughboys would be initiated into trench warfare.

The line around the city of Toul was the spot Pershing chose for the first rotations. This was one of the so-called quiet sectors. Except for occasional shelling, sniping, and trench raids, there had been no fighting there since 1914. Both sides seemed content to keep it that way.

Pershing chose this sector so his men could gain confidence without the risk of getting caught in a major attack and being mauled or beaten. A few weeks later the Germans discovered that the virgin American troops were now in the line. They decided to send a welcoming committee for the new arrivals.

At midnight on November 2, 1917, German infantrymen staged a well-executed raid on the American trench. After a short barrage, the Germans cut through the wire without being detected and infiltrated the American position. They did their bloody work and got away.

The Germans killed three doughboys and took 11 prisoners. Cpl. Nick Mulhall had the unfortunate distinction of being the first U.S. soldier of the war to be captured. He was never seen or heard from again.

The raid was intended to humiliate the Americans and shake their morale. Far from it, the United States now had three heroes to rally around, and the doughboys were eager to retaliate.

Thereafter, trench raids were frequent on both sides. On one occasion, Pvt. Leslie Lane turned a corner and was confronted by a group of soldiers. Lane ducked down to get a better view of them against the dark night sky.

"I was asked in French if I would consent to become a prisoner," he recalled. "I thought it was one of our French friends fooling around . . . The questioner then asked me in quite fluent English."

Lane stepped forward to see that it was a German sergeant-major with a party of about 15 men. The big German grabbed Lane and tried to silence him. "I then kicked the fellow in a vulnerable spot so furiously," recalled Lane, "that it brought him to his knees."

Lane then shot the sergeant-major before he himself was knocked unconscious. The shot alerted the other Americans and the rest of the raiders scattered back to their line. Lane soon came to, only to feel the German sergeant-major quivering at his feet.

"I reached to get a hold of him so I could get up first, and in doing so, found that he had pulled the pin from a 'potato masher' grenade, which exploded as I grabbed his hand, shattering three fingers on my left hand."

Another soldier, who saw this, reported that Lane had been killed. As Lane struggled to crawl to a first aid station, an American sentry turned the corner.

"Knowing there were Germans around and thinking I was killed, he was taking no chances and made a lunge for me with his bayonet. I saw the gleam of the bayonet aimed at my throat and raised my injured hand to ward off the blow."

The bayonet mangled his hand even more. The sentry then realized it was Lane and apologized profusely. "But I had no time to listen," recalled Lane, "as I was bleeding to death and wanted to get to First Aid before it was too late."

The enthusiasm and vigor of the doughboys was refreshing to the tired Allied soldiers. The patriotic American songwriter George M. Cohan put the spirit of the Americans to music. His most famous tune could be heard in every Allied trench, dugout, and gunpit on the western front. French, British, and American soldiers sang it while cleaning their guns. They whistled it while marching. They hummed it between bites of their hard biscuits and creamed beef.

Over there, over there, Spread the word, send the word, over there,  
That the Yanks are coming, the Yanks are coming, The drums drum  
drumming everywhere. So prepare, say a prayer. Send the word,  
spread the word to beware, We'll be over, we're coming over, And  
we won't come back till it's over over there.

By the end of 1917, the AEF was becoming a sizable, well-trained force. (Pershing was promoted to four-star general, the first one since the Civil War.) The Allies began to feel that they were past the danger zone and that now it was just a matter of time until the war was won. The Germans, however, had some deadly surprises left in store for the Allied armies.

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## *Continued Fighting, 1918*



Kaiser Wilhelm II (center), Hindenburg (left), and Ludendorff (right) formed the German High Command. Both Hindenburg and Ludendorff have placed one hand in a pocket, as was customary in the presence of the Kaiser, whose left arm was paralyzed from birth.

The first two months of 1918 were calm ones on the western front. They were too calm. The Allies began to wonder what the German army was up to. By mid-March, Allied intelligence confirmed that something big was going on. With remarkable secrecy, the Germans

were massing incredible amounts of troops, artillery, ammunition, and other equipment in preparation for a lightning offensive that would stun the world.

The German High Command reasoned that an all-out push in the west might knock the Allies out of the war before Pershing could fully organize the AEF into an independent fighting force. With tens of thousands of Americans arriving in France every week, the Germans knew that the time for attack was now or never. It was a desperate gamble, Germany's last hope for victory.

The British Fifth Army held a 41-mile line that started south of Arras and ran down to Soissons, where the British and French lines joined. The German plan was to crush the Fifth Army and drive a wedge into this sector. They believed that the British would fall back toward their supply bases on the English Channel—away from Paris. The French, the Germans assumed, would pull back to protect their capital. Thus a gap would exist, through which German troops could pour.

The commander of the British Fifth Army, Gen. Sir Hubert Gough, had seen the blow coming and made what preparations he could. General Pershing had loaned him three U.S. Engineer Regiments to help him with his defenses. Afterwards, the engineers fought with the Fifth Army as infantry, the first Americans to see full-scale warfare since the Civil War.

Gough had summoned his division leaders earlier that week for a pep talk. Interestingly, the British general ended by quoting Abraham Lincoln: "We accept this war for one object, a worthy object, and the war will end when that object is attained. Under God, I hope it will never end until that time."

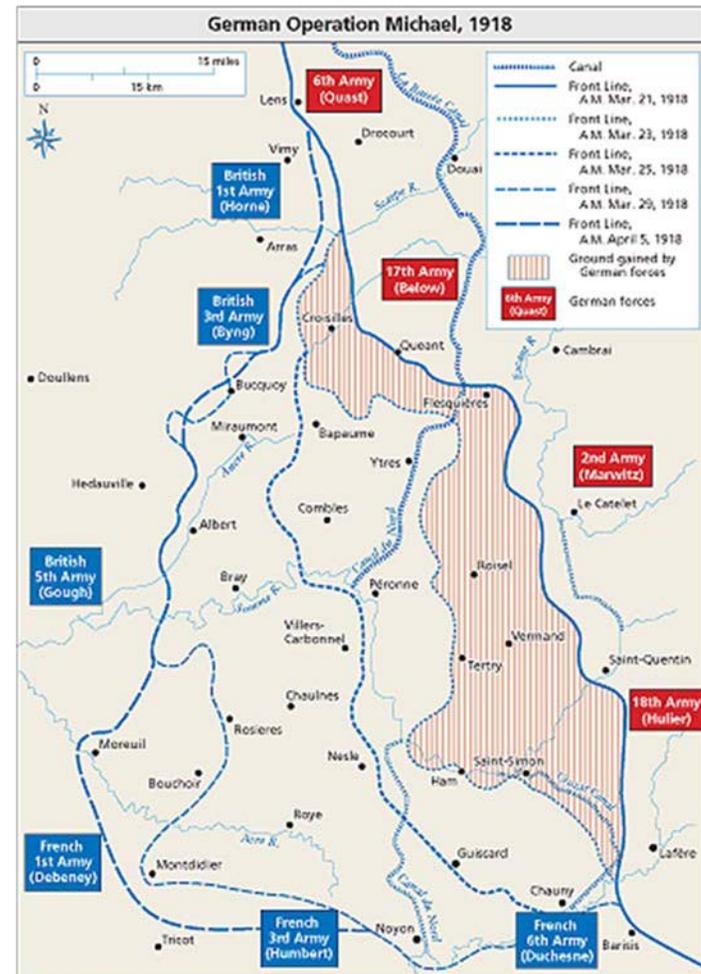
Although Germany had been slow to build tanks, its generals had found another answer to trench warfare. They used specially trained shock units called *Sturmtruppen* (in English, "storm troopers"). They

would filter forward under artillery cover and pierce the enemy's line of defense at a number of selected weak points. The strongest points would then be cut off and surrounded and could be dealt with later by other troops coming up behind.

Operation Michael, as the Germans called it, began at 4:50 AM on March 21, 1918, with a massive bombardment. The British waited for the attack that they knew would follow. They expected solid lines of men walking into the slaughter as was usually done. Instead, the storm troopers dashed forward, concealed by gas and fog, and slashed into the British line. The new tactics caught the British by surprise. The Fifth Army collapsed. All British reserves had to be rushed in to plug the gap.

This map shows the movement of the German army during Operation Michael, which took place between March 21 and April 5. The German plan was to divide the British and French forces near the northern border of France by using a new tactic: Instead of the slower approach associated with trench warfare, small, fast units of men would attack weak pockets in surges or "shocks." The strategy gave the units their name-storm troopers. The operation was successful, and Germany gained a significant amount of ground in a relatively short time, putting major pressure on American forces to join in combat to help the ailing Allies.

The German army struck again around Ypres on April 9. Here the British were better prepared. The Germans made only modest gains, at great cost. After 20 days of hard fighting, they gave up the attack. The German army's next blow, however, fell on the French in the hilly region between Soissons and Rheims, on May 27. It smashed through their defenses.



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This sector had been considered safe by the French high command. Only the most battered units, some less than half strength, had been stationed there. They had been sent there from more active parts of the front to rest and recuperate.

In just eight days, the Germans advanced 35 miles, more than all the Allied offensives of the previous three years put together. Along the way, the Germans captured much equipment and 65,000 prisoners.

Not since 1914 had the Allied situation been so precarious. The enemy was on the Marne River again, only 37 miles from Paris. The capital was gripped with panic. The French government had packed up and was ready to move to Bordeaux in southwest France.

Gen. Ferdinand Foch of France, who had just been made Supreme Allied Commander, had committed almost all remaining reserves to the sector under attack, but was unable to stem the German advance. The overwhelmed reinforcements, said Foch, "evaporated immediately like drops of rain on a red hot iron." Not since 1914 had Allied hopes of victory seemed so remote.

On May 30, Foch sent General Pétain, commander in chief of the French army, to General Pershing, to ask in person that American troops be sent to the danger point. Pétain had reviewed the situation in detail. He told Pershing that it was doubtful that France could survive the loss of Paris. It was not only the spiritual heart of the nation but also an important industrial center and the focal point of all the major railroad systems.

Pershing listened respectfully to the French general, but was reluctant to comply with his request. Of the half-million American soldiers then in Europe, only four divisions were ready for combat. Two of these had already been pushed into the French line and had seen limited action. If he loaned France more troops it would delay for weeks the plan for an independent U.S. Army.

He also knew the situation was critical. There was no choice. He agreed to put the U.S. Second and Third divisions at Pétain's disposal.

The Second Division, which included a brigade of U.S. Marines, had been stationed in a quiet region northwest of Paris. Commanded by Lt. Col. Frederick Wise, this was the only marine brigade on the western front. Now they headed out for the front as fast as they could along clogged roads. In the last week, these roads had become a tangle of wounded troops, supply trucks, animals, and civilian refugees fleeing the advancing Germans.

Vietnamese drivers (from French Indochina) were assigned to transport the Second Division, and had been on the road almost nonstop for 72 hours. Exhausted, several fell asleep at the wheel, killing and injuring their passengers.

It was dusk by the time the first battalions of doughboys arrived at the French Sixth Army headquarters. The French commanding officer did not know what to do with them. The front was in such flux that danger came from a dozen points at once. Where was the main German blow going to fall? French intelligence had broken down, unable to cope with the rapid movements of open warfare.

The French decided to rush the Americans into the line piecemeal, by companies, as had been done with France's own reinforcements. Col. Preston Brown, Second Division chief of staff, refused to consider this. The Second Division must fight as a unit, he insisted, on a defensive line supporting the French. First, stop the German spearhead, then counterattack. That was the only sensible plan.

Sixth Army headquarters was uneasy about entrusting a section of the line to the raw, inexperienced troops. How could they stand up against tough, disciplined German storm troopers? Colonel Brown indignantly replied, "These are American regulars. In 150 years they've never been beaten. They will hold."

Despite orders to the contrary, French units continued to give ground. They filtered back across fields waist-high in bright-green winter wheat, past deserted farms and villages. Many tried to retreat

in orderly fashion, fighting as they went. Others fled in panic, leaving a trail of discarded equipment for the enemy to gather and distribute among its own troops.

By noon on June 2, Lieutenant Colonel Wise's battalion of marines had moved into position and was digging in. Because entrenching equipment had not yet arrived, the men had to dig with bayonets, mess kits, and spoons. Although there were still a few French units between them and the enemy, they wasted no time. The Germans were already shelling their position with artillery.



American soldiers faced enemy fire in European towns and villages as well as the notorious trenches.

The marines waited in their pits. They were hungry. The mobile field kitchens were still far behind. The only food around was French rations, mainly cans of Argentine corned beef called "monkey meat" by the troops. But the beef had spoiled before being canned. Famished as they were, the marines could not choke down the putrid meat.

By late afternoon the last French unit marched by. Their commanding officer went up to one of Wise's company commanders and said that there were orders for everyone to retreat. "Retreat, hell!" barked marine Capt. Lloyd Williams. "We just got here!"

Soon after the blue-uniformed Frenchmen disappeared to the rear, the German bombardment grew more intense. From the woods on the marines' right front, German machine guns opened up. Two columns of enemy infantry fanned out into the field.

Col. Albertus W. Catlin, commanding the Sixth Marine Regiment, recorded an enthusiastic description of what took place in a book he wrote after the war called *With the Help of God and a Few Marines*:

If the German advance had looked beautiful to me . . . that metal curtain that our Marines rang down on the scene was even more so. The German lines did not break, they were broken. . . . Three times they tried to reform and break through that hail of lead, but they had to stop at last. The U.S. Marines had stopped them. Thus repulsed, with heavy losses, they retired, but our fire was relentless; it followed them to their death.

Although it was only a short, small-scale skirmish, Wise's battalion had stopped the Germans at their closest point to Paris since 1914. Back in America the marine corps became the toast of the nation. After the news of this engagement hit the papers, Marine enlistments rose 100 percent in two days.

An idealized marine graces this recruiting poster designed by artist James Montgomery Flagg.

Defending a dug-in position was one thing, however. It remained to be seen how well the Americans would do when the order came to counterattack.

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## *Turning the Tide*



For four years the Germans held a bulge around the city of Saint-Mihiel that jutted into the Allied line. On September 12, 1918, after a long artillery barrage by American gunners, the U.S. First Army launched an attack on the German defenders.

General Pershing knew how important it had been to help the French in their urgent hour of need. Yet, as the suspense eased, he grew impatient with General Foch, the Supreme Allied Commander. Although American troops were fighting together as units, Pershing felt it was time for an independent U.S. Army under one command. Pershing urged Foch to give him an exclusively American sector of the front.

Foch preferred to attach American divisions piecemeal to large Allied army units commanded by French or British generals, but finally agreed. This plan, however, would have to be put on hold because the next German offensive came so fast.

Germany's generals had one last card to play. They planned a two-pronged attack, east and west of Rheims, hoping to surround and capture this key city, some 50 miles east of Paris. If successful, a drive on Paris might still be possible.

The German generals, it seemed, had failed to fully appreciate the mathematics of change on the western front. The numerical superiority of the Germans had made possible the slashing gains of early spring. By midsummer the constant flow of fresh, fit Americans had overcome that advantage and permanently reversed the whole situation.

This thought was a comfort to Allied commanders. Yet to the Allied soldiers the thought of another German offensive was as terrifying as ever. On July 15, 1918, the German stormtroopers struck hard.

The most notable American actions were along the south bank of the Marne River. At Château-Thierry the Germans made a ferocious assault against the Third U.S. Division, but the Yanks refused to yield.

At one point the Thirty-eighth U.S. Infantry Regiment (part of the Third Division) was squeezed on three sides until it resembled a horseshoe. Despite the danger of encirclement, the Thirty-eighth held firm, inflicting three times as many casualties as they took. In one spot a dead American soldier was found with a rifle in one hand and a pistol in the other. Surrounding him lay 12 dead Germans. For its steadfast defense, the Thirty-eighth was given the nickname "Rock of the Marne."

East of Château-Thierry the Twenty-eighth Pennsylvania National Guard Division also clung to every foot of ground. Four of its companies were surrounded, but continued to resist. When their ammunition ran out, they grappled with the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. The Pennsylvanians won praise from Pershing, who said "They fought like iron men." From this the Twenty-eighth got its name, "the Iron Division."

Unable to penetrate the Allied line, the German offensive petered out on July 17. Along with it died Germany's last hope for victory. Now it was the German army that was in peril.

On July 18 the Allies began their counterattack. By mid-August they had taken back all the territory the Germans had gained in their spring offensives. As summer ended, a total of 310,000 Americans had seen action, with 67,000 killed or wounded.

"Last night I witnessed a truly pitiful sight," one doughboy, Leo Cuthbertson, wrote home, "the burying of our boys. It makes one's blood run cold and increases a passionate desire to deal out misery to the enemy-and I believe before this war is over, he will have more misery than he bargained for."

If the Americans had come to France to fight for democracy, to this purpose they now added revenge and hatred. Watching their buddies get blown away, day after day, turned innocent youths into hardened killers. Gary Roberts of the 167th Infantry wrote home from a hospital:

I got two of the rascals and finished killing a wounded one with my bayonet that might have gotten well had I not finished him. . . . I made the first two men holler "mercy, comrade, mercy." But how could I have mercy on such low-lived rascals as they are. Why, I just couldn't kill them dead enough it didn't seem like. . . . The first one I got was for momma and the other one for myself.

For the Allies, the danger had passed. The summer of 1918 had been the climax of the story of the western front. The grand finale was yet to come. For the soldiers on both sides, many frightful days still lay ahead.

By September, Pershing's dream of a self-sufficient American force of a million men had become a reality. He now sought to launch an offensive that was strictly American from beginning to end. Foch, a marshal by now, protested strongly. He still wanted to scatter American divisions among the French.

Pershing was furious. Even his divisional commanders were tired of having their troops thrown into areas they described as "meat grinders" while French units performed the mopping-up operations. Perhaps Marshal Foch thought this was fair since the French army had suffered years of fighting, but Pershing saw it as no more than a means to get the most glory at the Americans' expense.

Pershing would no longer argue the issue. He threatened to withdraw all American units to their training areas until the dispute was resolved. Foch gave in. He knew Pershing was not bluffing.

For four years the Germans had held a bulge around the city of Saint-Mihiel that jutted like a dagger into the Allied line. Pershing drew up careful plans to flatten that bulge. On September 12, the doughboys of the U.S. First Army attacked.

The operation went more smoothly than anyone had imagined. Pershing's timing could not have been better. The Germans, having caught wind of the plan, decided to pull out of the bulge. They were caught in the middle of their withdrawal when the Americans attacked.



U.S. troops conduct German prisoners out of a shattered town in the Saint-Mihiel Salient.

Taken by surprise, many German strongholds surrendered. In one instance, a sergeant captured 300 prisoners with an empty pistol. By the next day, the American pincers had surrounded the German force in Saint-Mihiel. Some 15,000 Germans were captured, and many artillery pieces as well. It was September 13, Pershing's 58th birthday. He said it was the happiest one he had had for a long time.

There was not much time to celebrate. The Allies were planning a massive push along the entire front. Pershing had less than two weeks to maneuver his army into position.

American casualties in the Saint-Mihiel offensive had been amazingly light. The operation was described as "a stroll." Indeed, it had been a picnic compared to what the doughboys were about to face in the Argonne Forest.

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## *Allied Air Power*



Flyers of the 148th American Aero Squadron in France prepare for a daylight raid on German trenches and cities.

An important factor in the success of the Saint-Mihiel operation was the superiority of Allied air power. An unprecedented force of 1,500 Allied planes gave General Pershing control of the skies. Although all the aircraft were of French or British make, many of the pilots were American.

This armada of combat airplanes would have been unimaginable four years earlier. When the war began, the total number of military aircraft in the world was only around 1,000.

Military thinkers had always understood the importance of knowing the enemy's whereabouts. By 1914 stationary gas-filled balloons were the primary craft for aerial reconnaissance. Raised and lowered from the ground by cables, they provided the observer with a stable platform from which to chart enemy artillery positions and troop movements.

When the war started, military planners were uncertain about the usefulness of airplanes. Planes at that time were very fragile and could carry only small payloads. On the other hand, they were able to cover more area and had greater freedom of movement than balloons. They could also fly behind enemy lines.

As the armies marched to war in August 1914, airplanes flew ahead of them to gather information on the enemy. Aviation was a hazardous profession. Airplanes were made mostly of cloth and wood. They would sometimes rip apart in strong wind or when diving too fast. Their crude gasoline engines were unreliable and gave off choking fumes, including ether. Many early pilots crashed after being rendered unconscious by ether fumes.

At first there was a chivalry between the pilots of both sides. They saw each other as brother adventurers. Opposing pilots would pass each other with a friendly wave or salute.

That soon changed. Pilots, and especially observers (if it was a two-seater plane), began to fill their pockets with objects to fling at enemy aircraft. Chains and bricks were favorite weapons. But even after pistols replaced these, little damage was done.

When rifles started replacing pistols, aerial shooting became serious, although the difficulty of loading and aiming a rifle in the narrow

confines of a cockpit kept the weapon from being more deadly. Shooting at a moving target through a maze of wires, struts and whirling propeller blades was tricky business. The firer often hit parts of his own plane.

Then one day a British observer took a machine gun into the air. The extra weight of the weapon made his plane unable to climb more than 3,500 feet. The observer spotted his prey, a German plane cruising at 5,000 feet. Firing the machine gun made a lot of noise and vibration, but had no effect on the enemy plane. Nonetheless, it was a significant milestone in aerial combat.

The rapid development of more powerful airplanes solved the problem of lifting a heavy machine gun into the air. There was still the problem of locating the gun where the pilot or observer could reach it, aim it and fire it-without hitting his own plane.

On many biplanes, the machine gun would be mounted on the top wing so that it could fire over the propeller. Firing it was easy enough, but reloading and in-flight repairs were impossible. The ideal was to have a machine gun directly in front of the cockpit. This way the pilot could easily reach the weapon. Aiming would just be a matter of pointing his plane toward the enemy.

The French led the way by attaching a metal wedge to the propeller, which deflected the bullets that would otherwise shoot the blades off. At first this seemed a promising solution, but it was found the striking bullets created too much stress on the propeller blades. The French air service abandoned the invention.

The big breakthrough came in the spring of 1915 when Germany developed a mechanism that synchronized the spin of the propeller with the stream of bullets. A device was hooked up to the machine gun so that it would not fire whenever the blade was in the way. By the end of May, Germany's new forward-firing guns were shooting Allied planes out of the sky.

The synchronization device gave German pilots a distinct advantage in aerial combat. It was a year before the Allies developed their own mechanism for forward-firing.

To the soldiers wallowing in the mud below, battles between airplanes, called dogfights, were gripping spectacles that broke the monotony of trench life. In a war where millions of soldiers had become faceless numbers to be manipulated by generals, the solo nature of the dogfights had tremendous romantic appeal.

Combat pilots became bigger-than-life heroes. These airborne warriors were a special breed, fighting their own individual battles high above the mud. The media depicted them as modern-day knights, jousting for the skies.

Combat aviation may have been more glamorous than being in the infantry, but it was no less deadly. In a dogfight the slightest mistake could cost the pilot his life. The life expectancy of a combat pilot was only 40 to 60 hours of flight time.

For the aviator, death usually came in two of its most terrible forms-by fire or falling from a great height. There were no parachutes for pilots yet, but many preferred to leap from their flaming planes rather than burn to death in their cockpits. No wonder that pilots called their machines "flying coffins." Yet aviators agreed that ascending, well-groomed and well-fed, to be killed in an airplane was better than going over the top from some filthy trench, to be mashed up in no-man's-land amid rotting corpses.

On April 18, 1916, seven Americans formed a fighter plane squadron (*escadrille* in French) that was to become one of the most famous and romanticized of all air units. They called themselves the Escadrille Americaine. Later they changed the name to Escadrille Lafayette in honor of the French general and hero of the American Revolution.

France provided the squadron with planes and other necessary equipment. All the pilots were American volunteers serving under the French flag. Needless to say, the Escadrille Lafayette added to the growing tension between Germany and the supposedly neutral United States.

In a short time the squadron captured America's heart. On May 18, 1916, it downed its first enemy aircraft. Soon, other Americans already serving in France were transferred to the Escadrille Lafayette. Raoul Lufbery, who had been among the Americans who enlisted as infantrymen in the French Foreign Legion in 1914, reported for duty on May 24, 1916.

On April 18, 1916, seven Americans formed a fighter plane squadron (escadrille in French). A month later Lieutenant Raoul Lufbery, a skilled and well-known aviator, joined the Escadrille Lafayette and became its most successful fighter pilot before his death in a dogfight on May 19, 1918.

Lufbery had been a well-known aviator before the war. Now he was to become the most skillful and successful fighter pilot of the Escadrille Lafayette. In August, Lufbery became America's first ace.

Lufbery became a hero. French and American newspapers were full of his picture and stories of his airborne exploits. He received bundles of fan mail. Children were named after him.

Lufbery was officially credited with 17 kills. No one will know for sure how many enemy aircraft he knocked out, since many went down behind German lines, without witnesses, and were not counted. The French and American nations mourned after Maj. Raoul Lufbery was killed in a dogfight on May 19, 1918.



At the time of Lufbery's death, the United States had been in the war for more than a year but was just forming its own independent air service. Three months earlier, the Escadrille Lafayette had been disbanded. Its pilots had earned the squadron 57 confirmed victories. Nine of the pilots had been killed in action. (Of the original seven men who formed the squadron, only one survived the war unscathed.)

In the United States, aircraft production was slow to get off the ground. In fact, the war ended before any American planes were sent to France. All the aircraft in the new U.S. Air Service were French-built, but the planes now had American insignia and markings.

The first American combat air unit was the Ninety-fifth Aero Squadron. The planes the French had sent to the unit had no machine

guns. Undaunted by the lack of weapons, the bold American aviators flew unarmed reconnaissance missions over hostile territory.

After several weeks, the Allies started to criticize the Americans. Allied Command had received reports of aerial engagements by the squadron, with one American pilot lost but so far no enemy planes shot down by the Ninety-fifth.

The American squadron commander returned a report saying that the Ninety-fifth would be most happy to shoot down enemy planes if the Allied command would see fit to supply it with machine guns. After this report, the squadron was immediately pulled from the line and fitted with machine guns.

No pilot did more to enhance the reputation of the Ninety-fifth than Eddie Rickenbacker. A world-famous race car driver and, for a time, General Pershing's personal chauffeur, Rickenbacker put his skill and talent into flying. With 26 confirmed kills to his credit, Captain Rickenbacker was America's leading ace of the First World War.

With 26 confirmed kills to his credit, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker was the leading American ace of the First World War.

No American pilot had more of a mystique than 2d Lt. Frank "Balloon Buster" Luke of the U.S. Twenty-seventh Aero Squadron. An audacious and talented pilot, Luke became, in less than three weeks' time, America's second greatest ace. A loner, Luke preferred to perform missions on his own. Because his reckless behavior in the air made him dangerous to fly with, Luke's commander gave him permission to operate alone.





One important function of fighter planes was to shoot down enemy observation balloons. Frank "Balloon Buster" Luke sought out this treacherous task and continued to destroy German balloons in defiance of a disciplinary grounding.

One important function of fighter planes was to shoot down enemy observation balloons. Because of antiaircraft fire from the ground and enemy fighters assigned to protect these observers, "balloon busting" was a treacherous task. When Luke was told that it was the most difficult and dangerous job a pilot could undertake, he decided to be the best.

Luke's war on balloons began on September 12, 1918, when he sent one down in flames. He shot down two balloons on September 14,

three more the next day and another three on September 16. On September 18, he shot down two balloons and three enemy fighters. As a reward Luke was granted leave in Paris, but he came back early. On September 26, he downed a German plane, and on September 27, another balloon.

Luke was an excellent pilot, but not the most disciplined soldier. When ordered to do something, he was often defiant, as well as repeatedly AWOL, or absent without leave. On September 29 Luke was placed under arrest and, at the same time, awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for valor.

Luke was grounded, but managed to take off in his plane before he could be apprehended. As he flew over the American trenches, he dropped a note to the doughboys below that read: "Watch for three Hun balloons on the Meuse."

American observers looked on as three enemy balloons became earth-bound fireballs. While he was downing his third victim, antiaircraft shrapnel ripped into Luke's plane. Unable to gain altitude, Luke was forced to crash-land in a nearby meadow behind enemy lines.

Luke climbed out of his cockpit without a scratch. He was, however, surrounded by German soldiers. They shouted at him to surrender, but Frank Luke refused. He stood defiantly in the meadow, shooting his pistol at them until he was killed. More than 650 American aviators saw action during the war. Although they lost 316 aircraft to the enemy, they took down 927 German airplanes and balloons-an impressive kill ratio of almost three-to-one. By mid-September 1918, the Allies had achieved supremacy in the air. Yet the soldiers on the ground still had a long way to go.

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## *The Fight Ends, Nov. 1918*



The German army continued to give ground on the western front throughout October 1918.

The German army continued to give ground on the western front throughout October 1918. Yet as measured on the map of Europe, Germany's peril was not obvious. In the East, German troops occupied a vast stretch of the Russian empire from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. In the West, Germany still had most of Belgium as well as troops firmly entrenched on French soil.

The Allies were anticipating a long, drawn-out fight. The German army was battered and bloody, but not broken. It would surely die hard. Few Allied military or political leaders believed the war would end before mid-1919.

The Germans, however, had lost hope for the future. They knew the French and British were exhausted, but fresh American soldiers were landing in France at the rate of 10,000 every 24 hours. It would only be a matter of time until the United States's enormous resources, production, and manpower overwhelmed Germany.

In early October Berlin began sending notes to President Wilson, from whom the Germans thought they could get the best arrangement for peace. Although Wilson favored some leniency toward Germany, he was not in a position to make decisions without consulting France and Britain.

Wilson's main concern was that Germany become a democracy. "I have no quarrel with the German people," he would say. Then on October 10, 1918, a U-boat sank a British passenger ferry in the English Channel. Hundreds perished, including women, children, and some Americans.

Public outrage, and his own anger, forced Wilson to take a firmer stand. He replied to Berlin that it would be left up to the Allied military leaders to determine the conditions for an armistice. The Allied generals took Germany's peace initiative as a sign of weakness. They resolved to push harder than ever against the German army.

Although the Allies now realized that the end of the war was near, the generals gave orders not to inform the soldiers at the front. They did not want the effort of the troops to slacken while the two sides negotiated. Pershing sent a strong order to his division commanders:

Now that Germany and the Central Powers are losing, they are begging for an armistice. Their request is an acknowledgement of weakness and clearly means that the Allies are winning the war. That is the best of reasons for our pushing the war more vigorously at this moment. . . . We must strike harder than ever. . . . There can be no conclusion to this war until Germany is brought to her knees.

Meanwhile the Allied armies were making much progress on other fronts. On September 29, 1918, Bulgaria surrendered. The crumbling Ottoman Empire signed an armistice on October 30, and Austria-Hungary did so on November 3.

In August 1914, the western front of World War I stretched south from Belgium, through the Ardennes Forest, and into Germany. Over the next four years, a stalemate settled over the front as the Allied and Axis powers made little offensive or defensive progress. In early 1918, with the promise of U.S. troops soon arriving on the western front to aid the French army, the Germans launched a major invasion of France, intending to take Paris. By the summer of 1918, the Germans had taken much of northern France and were quickly approaching Paris. At the time of Armistice in November 1918, the Allied forces had pushed the Germans almost as far back as the front line at the start of the war.

On November 10, Germany's last monarch gave up his throne, his crown, and his country. Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated and fled to Holland. There he puttered, gardened, and spoke endless "if onlys" until his death in 1941.

At 5 AM on November 11, 1918, Germany signed an armistice with the Allies. Yet the truce did not go into effect that moment. It had been decided by the Allied representatives that, for the sake of



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historical drama, the war would not end until precisely 11 AM—that is, the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month.

This six-hour delay for the sake of a good newspaper headline was an unpardonable gesture. Across the front it was taken by many commanders as a signal for a final bloodbath.

Artillery units everywhere fired frantically, usually without even aiming. Both sides seemed to be trying to shoot every last shell so that none would be left over.

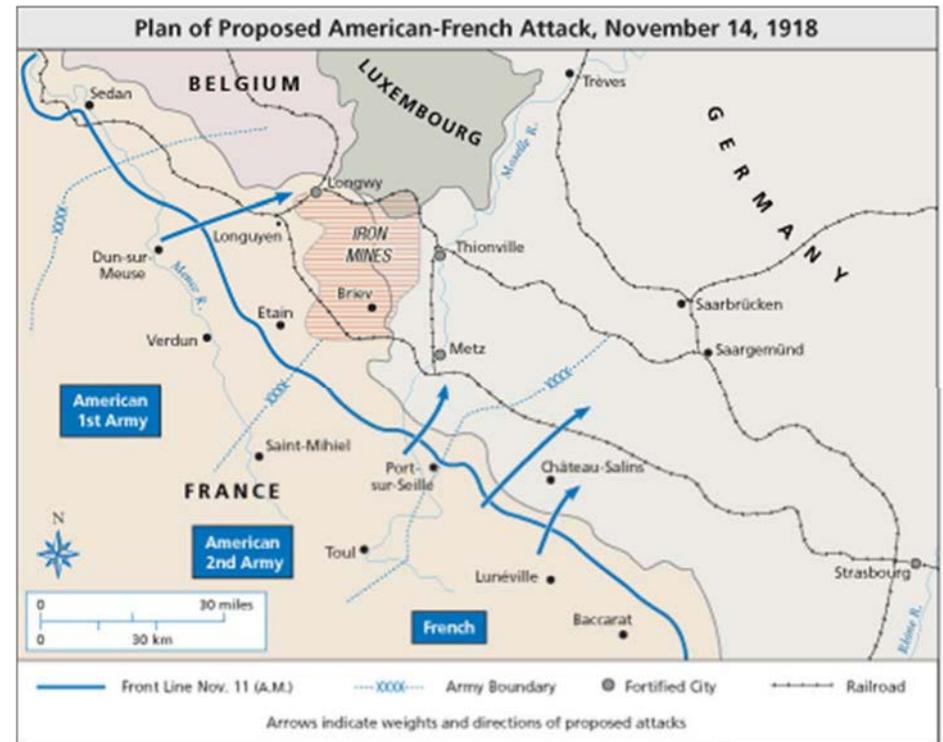
Many American infantry units were ordered to advance right up to 11 AM. "We thought it was a joke," wrote Lt. Harry C. Rennagel of the U.S. 101st Infantry Regiment. It was no joke. It was the final convulsion of the most horrific and costly war in history.

Lieutenant Rennagel had left the hospital the day before and arrived at his outfit at 10 AM on November 11. He was joking and laughing with his men, "waiting for the gong to ring when orders came to go over the top." He and his men moved out as ordered, at 25 minutes to 11. They advanced as slowly and as cautiously as they could.

By October 1918 the German army had considerably weakened, and German leaders began considering peace negotiations. Allied leaders, however, did not believe the war would end until sometime in 1919 and planned to push hard against the vulnerable German military. This map shows the proposed attack against Germany for November 14, 1918, which never came to play, as armistice was signed and went into effect on November 11.

At 10:55 AM Lieutenant Rennagel heard gunfire. "I hurried over and there lay five of my best men." He knelt beside one of the young men who had a hole near his heart.

"Lieutenant," said the fatally injured soldier, "I'm going fast. Don't say I'll get better, you know different and this is a pretty unhappy time for me. You know we all expected things to cease today, so I wrote my girl. We were to be married when I returned, and [I told her and] my folks that I was safe and well and about my plans. And now-by some order-I am not going home."



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"I looked away," said Lieutenant Rennagel, "and when I looked back-he had gone . . . I can honestly tell you I cried and so did the rest."

Suddenly, across the entire western front, everything stopped. Mouths wide open, soldiers stared into no-man's-land, dumbstruck by the wonderful quiet that now reigned.

A few minutes later, men began to cry, laugh, shake hands, slap each other on the back, and then cheer wildly. For the first time, they stood up straight in their foxholes. They walked in the open with nothing to fear. They built campfires for the first time. They took off their boots, dried their socks and warmed their chilled fingers.

Within minutes Yanks and Germans got together in the middle ground. Most left their rifles in the trenches. Active bartering sprang up. Doughboys gave the Germans cigarettes, food rations, and soap in exchange for belt buckles, bayonets, and even a few Iron Crosses (German army medals).

Most of the fighting men were too dazed to think much about the future. Relief and joy were all they felt. "No more bombs," said one Yank, "no more mangled, bleeding bodies, no more exposure to terrifying shell fire in the rain and cold and mud! It will be difficult to adjust the mind to the new state of things."



At 5 A.M. on November 11, 1918, Germany signed an armistice with the Allies. Yet the truce went into effect only later that day, at 11 A.M.

When the 11th hour struck, it was only 6 AM in Washington and New York. There were no radios to spread the news. Yet within hours, a national "yahoo!" had started along the East Coast and spread westward.



In towns and cities throughout France and Britain, people took to the streets to celebrate the end of fighting.

In towns and cities throughout France and Britain, people took to the streets in celebration. The crowds became drunk with excitement. In London people smashed shop windows and overturned vehicles. In

the end, the London police had to clear the streets and put a few rowdies in jail.

Berlin was even more rowdy, but for another reason. Defeat had caused civil strife and violence to break out. Returning soldiers were horrified to find barricades in the streets of the German capital. They heard the crack of rifle fire and felt the concussion of grenades. Some soldiers had survived the long war only to be shot down in their own city by fellow citizens.

**Citation:** "The Fight Ends, Nov. 1918." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=59988>>.

# African Americans in World War I

PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON said America's entry into World War I in April 1917 was intended to make "the world safe for democracy." To African Americans who faced discrimination, segregation, and disenfranchisement, America was hardly a model of democracy. Many national leaders feared African Americans would not join the war effort. While few African Americans—or whites—volunteered to fight, most went along with the draft, with most African Americans serving in all-black regiments.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1913** Woodrow Wilson, the first Southern Democrat elected president since the Civil War, takes office. Shortly thereafter he issues orders segregating African Americans from other federal workers in Washington.

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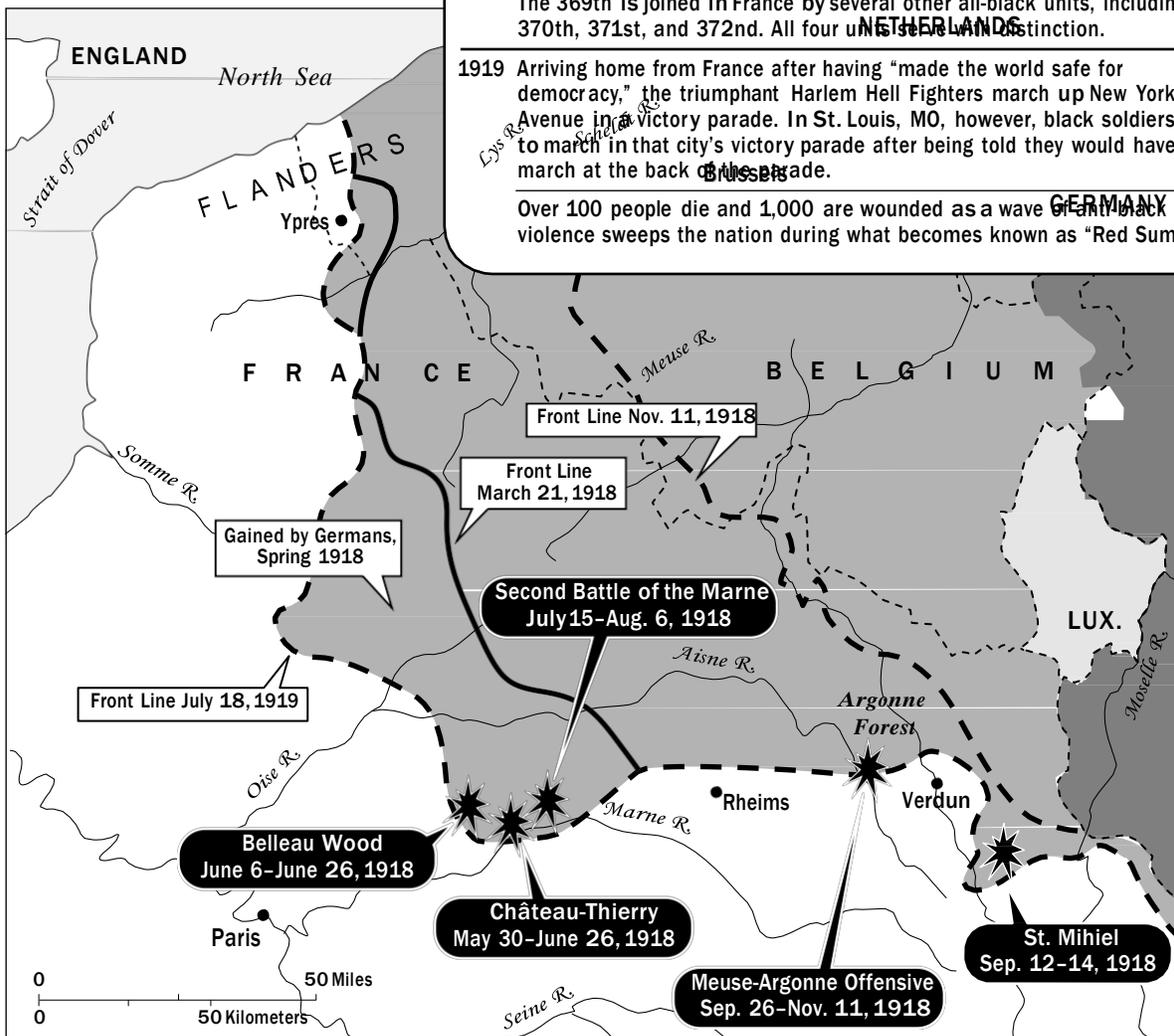
- 1917** The U.S. enters World War I. Writing in *The Crisis*, W.E.B. DuBois encourages African Americans to rally behind the war effort. Over 700,000 register for the draft.
  - The first all-black officer's training school is opened in Des Moines, IA.
  - The Central Committee of Negro College Men is organized at Howard University to demonstrate African-American willingness to fight.
  - In Spartanburg, SC, a near riot occurs when whites object to the Fifteenth New York Infantry training locally. The crisis is avoided when the unit is sent overseas, after being renamed the 369th U.S. Infantry.
  - In Houston TX, whites attack members of the Twenty-fourth Infantry, sparking the retaliatory shooting deaths of 17 whites. As a result, 13 members of the Twenty-fourth are hung, 41 receive life imprisonment.

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- 1918** The 369th Infantry begins combat duty, serving under French command. In 191 days of combat action—longer than any other U.S. unit—they never lose a man or any ground to the enemy. The Germans nickname them "The Harlem Hellfighters." In addition, the unit's regimental marching band is credited as the first group of musicians to introduce jazz to Europe.
  - Sergeant Henry Johnson of the 369th Infantry fights off 20 Germans with a knife and the butt of his unloaded gun to rescue fellow soldier Needham Roberts.
  - The 369th is joined in France by several other all-black units, including the 370th, 371st, and 372nd. All four units serve in distinction.

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- 1919** Arriving home from France after having "made the world safe for democracy," the triumphant Harlem Hell Fighters march up New York's Fifth Avenue in a victory parade. In St. Louis, MO, however, black soldiers refuse to march in that city's victory parade after being told they would have to march at the back of the parade.
  - Over 100 people die and 1,000 are wounded as a wave of anti-black violence sweeps the nation during what becomes known as "Red Summer."



## Hispanic-American Participation in World War II

ALTHOUGH EXACT RECORDS are not available as to the number of Hispanic Americans who served in the U.S. armed forces during World War II, estimates range from 250,000 to 500,000, or between two and a half and five percent of all those who served. Unlike other minorities, such as African Americans or Japanese Americans, few Hispanics served in segregated units. The exception was the all-Puerto Rican 65th Infantry Regiment. Hispanics participated in all campaigns of the war, both in the European theater and in the Pacific. Large numbers of Hispanics were

stationed in the Philippines, in part because Spanish is one of the main languages spoken by Filipinos. Hispanics were among the 16,000 American and Filipino troops who made the infamous Bataan Death March as prisoners of Japan. Hispanics were also on the beaches of Normandy during the D-Day invasion in June 1944. All told, 12 Hispanic Americans, all listed in the box feature below, received the prestigious Congressional Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for military heroism.

### Hispanic Winners of the Congressional Medal of Honor in World War II

**Lucien Adams**

Rank: Staff Sergeant

Unit: 30th Infantry, 3rd Infantry Division

Place: Near St. Die, France

Date: 10/28/45

**Marcario Garcia**

Rank: Staff Sergeant

Unit: Company B, 22nd Infantry, 4th Infantry Division

Place: Near Grosshau, Germany

Date: 11/27/44

**Harold Gonsalves**

Rank: Private First Class

Unit: U.S. Marine Corp Reserve (Serving with 4th Battalion, 15th Marines, 6th Marine Division)

Place: Okinawa

Date: 4/15/45

**David M. Gonzales**

Rank: Private First Class

Unit: Company A, 127th Infantry, 32nd Infantry Division

Place: Villa Verde Trail, Luzon, Philippine Islands

Date: 4/25/45

**Silvestre S. Herrera**

Rank: Private First Class

Unit: Company E, 142nd Infantry, 36th Infantry Division

Place: Near Mertzwiller, France

Date: 3/15/45

**José M. Lopez**

Rank: Sergeant

Unit: 23rd Infantry, 2nd Infantry Division

Place: Near Krinkelt, Belgium

Date: 12/17/44

**Joe P. Martinez**

Rank: Private

Unit: Company K, 32nd Infantry, 7th Infantry Division

Place: Attu, Aleutian Islands (near Alaska)

Date: 5/26/43

**Manuel Perez, Jr.**

Rank: Private First Class

Unit: Company A, 511th Parachute Infantry, 11th Airborne Division

Place: Fort William McKinley, Luzon, Philippine Islands

Date: 2/13/45

**Cleto Rodriguez**

Rank: Technical Sergeant

Unit: Company B, 148th Infantry, 37th Division

Place: Paco Railroad Station, Manila, Philippine Islands

Date: 2/9/45

**Alejandro R. Ruiz**

Rank: Private First Class

Unit: 165th Infantry, 27th Infantry Division

Place: Okinawa

Date: 4/28/45

**José F. Valdez**

Rank: Private First Class

Unit: Company B, 7th Infantry Division

Place: Near Rosenkrantz, France

Date: 1/25/45

**Ysmael R. Villegas**

Rank: Staff Sergeant

Unit: Company F, 127th Infantry, 32nd Infantry Division

Place: Villa Verde Trail, Luzon, Philippine Islands

Date: 3/20/45

### Hispanic Heroism in the European Theater



### Hispanic Heroism in the Pacific Theater



## *Glossary*

- ✓ **ace**  
A flyer who shoots down five planes in aerial combat.
- ✓ **Allies**  
In World War I, the 24 nations that opposed the Central Powers. Only 12 provided troops: Belgium, the British Empire, France, Greece, Italy, Japan, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, and the United States.
- ✓ **armistice**  
A truce or agreement by warring parties to cease hostilities, at least temporarily but usually with the intention of negotiating a permanent peace. The best known armistice of modern times is the one signed by the Allies and Central Powers that brought World War I to an end at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918.
- ✓ **attrition**  
The calculated goal of the leaders in charge of the battles not primarily to take ground but to kill as many of their opponent's men as possible. World War I became a war of attrition.
- ✓ **balloon busting**  
The goal of fighter planes to shoot down enemy observation balloons.
- ✓ **bayonet**  
A sharp, slashing steel blade attached to the muzzle of a rifle for killing enemy soldiers in hand-to-hand combat.
- ✓ **Big Bertha**  
A gigantic German gun, designed to shoot heavy shells up to a range of 75 miles. There were only two, transported into France to fire on Paris. They were named after a daughter of the Krupp family, the munitions manufacturer of these guns. (In fact, the German nickname was dicke Bertha, meaning "fat Bertha.")
- ✓ **blockade**  
Isolating a port, city, region, or nation by surrounding it with ships or troops to prevent the passage of traffic or supplies.
- ✓ **Central Powers**  
In World War I, the four nations that opposed the Allies: Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany, and Turkey.
- ✓ **convoy**  
A formation of ships in which the most important vessels—often loaded troop transports—are surrounded by smaller, faster-moving combat ships.
- ✓ **destroyers, combat**  
Ships designed and equipped to attack submerged submarines.
- ✓ **Devil Dogs**  
the name given to the U.S. Marines by the Germans in World War I because of the fierceness of their fighting.
- ✓ **doughboys**  
A name given to U.S. Army fighters. Although the origin of this term is not known, legend says it was linked to soldiers in the Civil War who had big, round brass buttons on their uniforms, reminiscent of "doughboys," which were dumplings or fried dough.
- ✓ **escadrille**  
The French name for a fighter plane squadron, usually composed of six planes. The Escadrille Lafayette, a U.S. squadron, became one of the most famous and romanticized of all air units.
- ✓ **flame-thrower**  
From the German Flammenwerfer, a weapon with a long nozzle through which oil from an attached container could be discharged by the pressure of compressed air, spraying the enemy with fire.
- ✓ **Fourteen Points**  
Proposal by President Woodrow Wilson offering 14 points that he believed would bring about a democratic, progressive world peace.

- ✓ **go over the top**  
The military expression for when soldiers were ordered to leave their trenches and venture into no-man's-land to resume fighting.
- ✓ **howitzer**  
Cannons for long-range firing of heavy shells that could drop them in a plunging curve, thus reaching troops behind cover.
- ✓ **Iron Cross**  
A German army medal signifying the highest honor.
- ✓ **Iron Division**  
Nickname of the Twenty-eighth Pennsylvania National Guard Division. They were praised by General Pershing, who said "they fight like iron men."
- ✓ **kaiser**  
The German emperor, a name derived from the Roman caesar. During World War I, Kaiser Wilhelm II reigned.
- ✓ **KP**  
(kitchen police)The name given to menial chores done by soldiers in the kitchens or mess units.
- ✓ **League of Nations**  
An international coalition of nations, proposed by President Wilson, who believed it would ensure a safe and peaceful future for the world. Although the league was established in 1920, the United States never joined the League of Nations, and this left it essentially powerless.
- ✓ **lifeboat**  
A small boat that can be lowered quickly when a damaged ship has to be abandoned.
- ✓ **minelaying**  
The duty of specific ships to lay a field of explosive devices (mines) underwater with the intent of blowing up submarines.
- ✓ **mortar**  
A relatively small thus portable cannon, loaded in the muzzle, that fires its shells at a low speed and short range but with a high, arching trajectory.
- ✓ **nest**  
A well-prepared position from which soldiers can fire weapons such as machine guns.
- ✓ **no-man's-land**  
The strip of land between enemy trenches that is held by neither side. In World War I, it was usually cratered by shell holes, often muddy, and laced with deadly barbed wire.
- ✓ **periscope**  
An optical instrument with specially arranged prisms and mirrors that makes it possible for a submarine crew to view the surface of the water when the submarine is submerged.
- ✓ **shell shock**  
A nervous condition or mental disorder found in military personnel and brought on by the constant strain and fears of combat conditions in warfare.
- ✓ **storm troopers**  
Translation of the German Sturmtruppen, specially trained German soldiers who could pierce the enemy's line of defense by finding its weakest points.
- ✓ **submarine**  
A vessel that can be navigated under water, especially effective in war for the discharge of torpedoes.
- ✓ **tank**  
A self-propelled, heavily armored combat vehicle armed with cannon and machine guns that moves on caterpillar treads.
- ✓ **tent cities**  
In World War I, the name given to camps located in the South that were poorly constructed and lacking in wooden barracks; they were used primarily to house black men drafted into the U.S. Army.
- ✓ **torpedo**  
A self-propelled underwater projectile launched from a submarine, ship, or airplane and designed to detonate oncontact or in the vicinity of the target, usually a ship.

- ✓ **trench**  
A long, narrow, deep excavation in the ground serving as a shelter for soldiers to protect them from enemy fire.
- ✓ **U-boat**  
A familiar name for a German submarine, derived from the German word for such a vessel, Unterseeboot ("undersea boat").
- ✓ **victory gardens**  
With the slogan "Food Will Win the War" popularized in the United States, patriotic people took on the planting of their own vegetable gardens so that commercially grown food could be shipped to the soldiers. The nation's Boy Scouts also planted victory gardens under the slogan, "Every Scout to Feed a Soldier."
- ✓ **war bonds**  
U.S. treasury bonds sold to the public to raise the money needed to fund the war.
- ✓ **Yank**  
The popular name given to U.S. soldiers by their British allies. It is derived from "Yankee," a name for Americans that appeared in the American Revolutionary War days. The exact origin of the name is unknown.
- ✓ **zeppelins**  
Germany's cumbersome, slow-moving, lighter-than-air balloon ships, powered by gasoline engines, intended to be used for bombing missions. Designed by Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, a German general and airship builder, these balloons were highly flammable.

**Citation:** "Glossary." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.  
<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=73414>>.Statistics

## *U.S. Statistics for World War I, 1917-1918*

### **Casualty Statistics**

Branch of Service	Number Serving	Casualties			
		Total Deaths	Battle Deaths	Other Deaths	Wounds (not mortal) <sup>2</sup>
U.S. Army <sup>3</sup>	4,057,101	106,378	50,510	55,868	193,663
U.S. Navy	599,051	7,287	431	6,856	819
U.S. Marine Corps	78,839	2,851	2,461	390	9,520
Total	4,734,991	116,516	53,402	63,114	204,002

### **Cost of War**

Cost (in 2007 dollars): \$364 billion

### **Medal of Honor Statistics**

Branch of Service	Number of Recipients
U.S. Army	89
U.S. Navy	20
U.S. Marine Corps	10
Total	119

<sup>1</sup>The years 1917 to 1918 reflect the period of U.S. involvement in World War I; the war began in 1914.

<sup>2</sup>Marine Corps data represents the number of individuals wounded, whereas all other data in this column represent the total number (incidence) of wounds.

<sup>3</sup>Includes air service. Battle deaths and wounds not mortal include casualties suffered by American forces in northern Russia to August 25, 1919, and in Siberia to April 1, 1920. Other deaths cover the period April 1, 1917, to December 31, 1918.

*Sources:* Casualty data courtesy of the U.S. Department of Defense. Financial data courtesy of the Congressional Research Service, White House Office of Management and Budget. Medal of Honor data courtesy of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

**Citation:** "Statistics." *America at War Online*. Infobase Publishing. Web. 24 May 2016.

<<http://online.factsonfile.com/RecURL.aspx?did=81820>>.