THE U.S. ARMY
CAMPAIGNS OF WORLD WAR I

SUPPORTING ALLIED OFFENSIVES

8 AUGUST–11 NOVEMBER 1918

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

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Cover: *A 30th Division soldier firing a Lewis gun* (National Archives)

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

JON T. HOFFMAN
Chief Historian

SUPPORTING ALLIED OFFENSIVES 8 AUGUST–11 NOVEMBER 1918

The infusion of American manpower into the depleted ranks of the Entente armies was crucial in deciding the outcome of the First World War. In addition to American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) operations at St. Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne, doughboys participated in critical Allied actions on battlefields ranging from Belgium and northern France to Italy. Despite the U.S. military leadership's insistence on maintaining the independent nature of their forces, American troops routinely fought as a part of the British, French, and Italian armies up to the end of the war. Through these efforts, the Americans provided critical reinforcement to the Allies and made a vital contribution to the truly multinational victory of the Allied Powers in 1918.

Strategic Setting

By the end of 1917, the Central Powers possessed a significant strategic advantage over the Allies. Russia had collapsed into revolution and was in the process of withdrawing from the war, Italy was reeling from a catastrophic defeat at the hands of a combined German and Austro-Hungarian force at Caporetto, and the French Army was still recovering from the mutinies of the previous summer. Even though the British still had considerable military power, they had not yet overcome the German submarine menace, which continued to take its toll on the strained British economy. The United States, meanwhile, had landed only four complete divisions in Europe despite having entered the war the previous spring. At the beginning of 1918, therefore, the outcome of the war remained very much in question.

For the Allies, survival—to say nothing of victory—seemingly depended on the arrival of fresh American forces, and both the British and French sought to amalgamate American manpower into their armies. The French requested American battalions to serve in French brigades, while the British called for smaller

units or even raw recruits for service in existing British units. AEF commander General John J. Pershing stubbornly refused all such proposals, insisting that the United States would create an independent army to serve on the Western Front. However, the slow buildup of American forces in France put added pressure on Pershing to agree to some form of compromise.

As Russia's collapse freed German forces for transfer to the Western Front, the British made a fresh push for amalgamation. In January 1918, General Sir William R. Robertson, the British chief of the Imperial General Staff, presented Pershing with a proposal to ship 150,000 American troops to France using British vessels, provided that the new arrivals initially would serve in British units. This was a tempting offer, as the small U.S. merchant fleet was ill-equipped to handle the logistical requirements of transporting hundreds of thousands of additional soldiers to France. Although annoyed that Robertson attached conditions to the transport of American units, Pershing told Secretary of War Newton D. Baker that "basically the question presented is, can we afford not to send over extra men to help our allies in what may be an emergency when the necessary sea transportation is offered and we have the spare men."

In the ensuing negotiations, the British ultimately agreed to transport six full American divisions across the Atlantic. Infantry and auxiliary units would train with the British while the artillery trained with the French. Once the units completed training, the divisions theoretically would reunite and return to American control, although it was possible that they would have to be committed to combat in an emergency. As with any compromise, the arrangement did not entirely please either side, but it promised to speed up the arrival of American forces, which all parties agreed was essential to defeat the Central Powers. In the end, British vessels transported nearly half of all American soldiers sent to France.

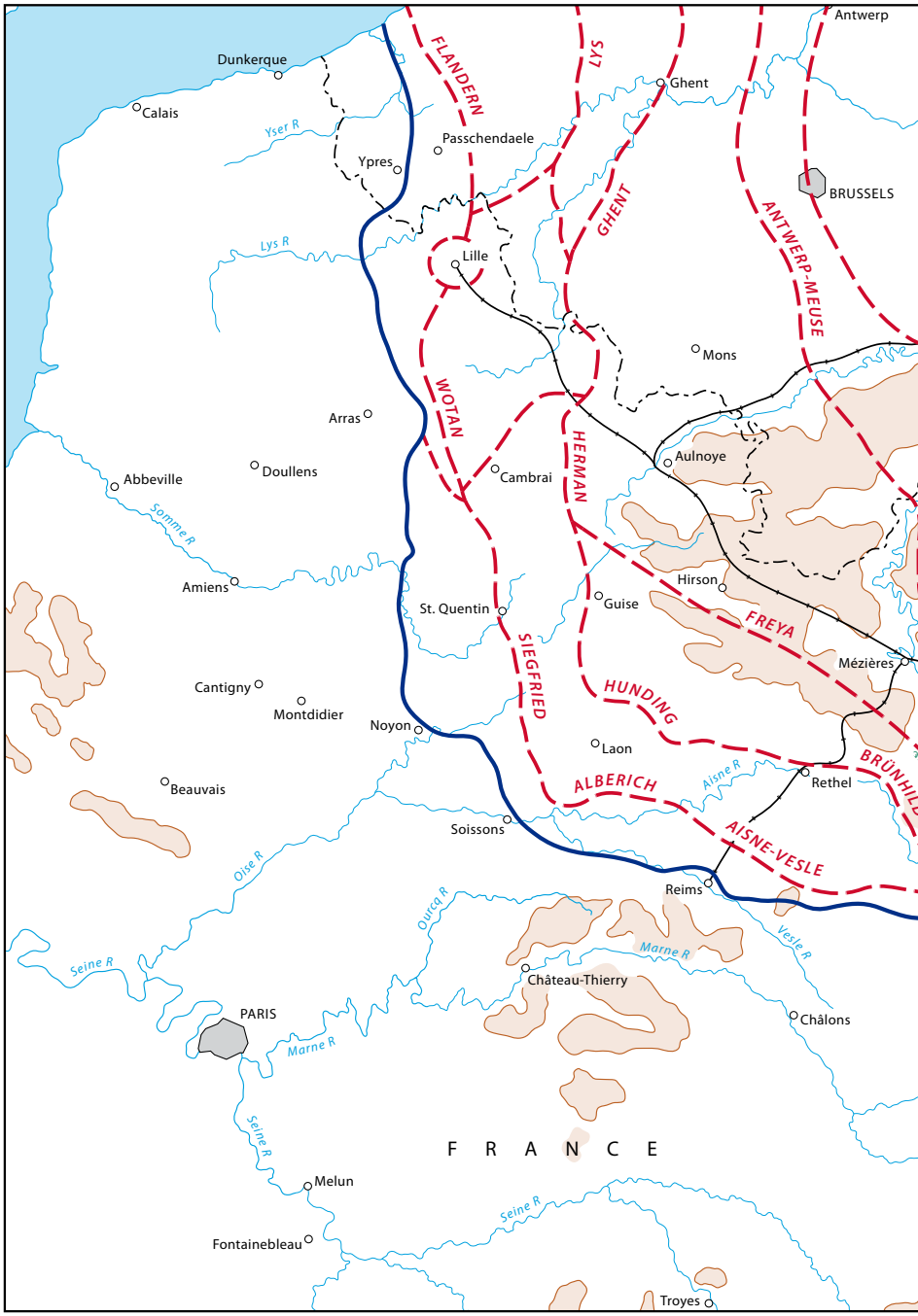
For the German Army High Command (Oberste Heeresleitung; OHL), the key concern was the timing of the Americans' arrival. The Germans estimated that the Americans would have enough trained units to assume the offensive in 1919. With the continued transfer of men from the east, the OHL sensed an opportunity. If it could successfully mount an offensive that divided French and British forces on the Western Front, and possibly pushed the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) off the continent, then France would have to sue for peace and the impending American buildup would be moot. With their objective clear, the Germans began a

race to see whether they or the Americans would bring enough forces to bear on the Western Front to force a final decision.

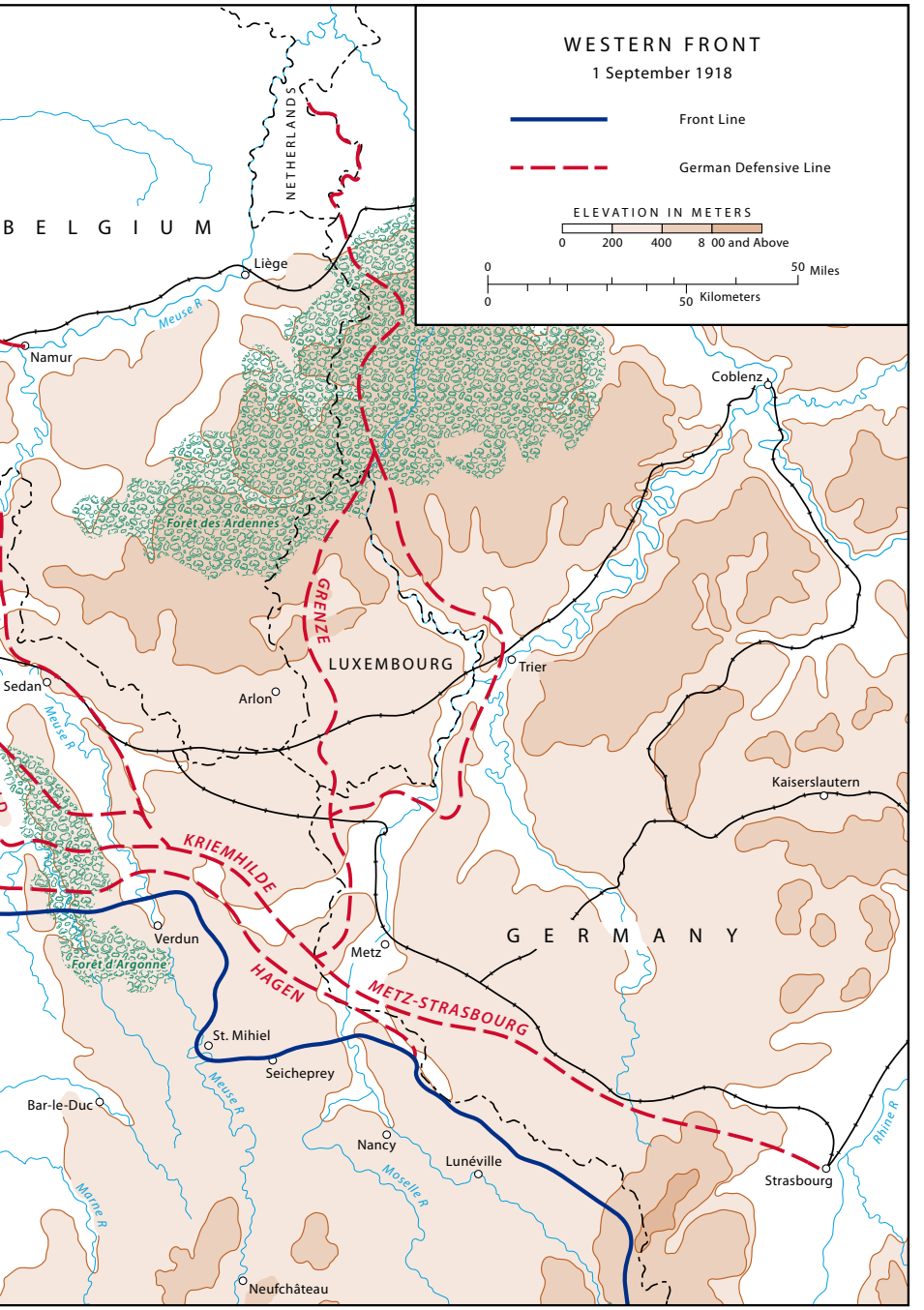
General Erich Ludendorff, the de facto head of the German Army in 1918, was the mastermind behind the series of attacks that have come to be known as the German Spring Offensives, or *Kaiserschlacht* (Kaiser's Battle). The first offensive, code-named *Operation Michael*, slammed into the British Third and Fifth Armies along an eighty-kilometer front in the province of Picardy. The Fifth Army had recently taken over a quiet sector near St. Quentin and was recuperating from losses sustained the previous year in the Third Battle of Ypres. At 0440 on 21 March, the Germans began firing some 3.2 million rounds of high explosive and mustard gas shells, followed by an infantry assault. The Fifth Army narrowly avoided destruction as the Germans drove forward over fifty kilometers, creating a massive salient near the important rail hub of Amiens.

Although the Allies fell back, their lines did not break, and the German attack lost momentum by 5 April. The Germans continued to hammer the Allied lines over the next few months with three more offensives, code-named *Georgette* (9–29 April), *Blücher-Yorck* (27 May–5 June), and *Gneisenau* (9–13 June). *Georgette* hit the British in Flanders astride the Lys River, prompting BEF commander Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig to issue an "Order of the Day" on 11 April, declaring that "each one of us must fight to the end." After the *Georgette* attack stalled, the OHL turned its attention to the French with *Blücher*. German armies blasted the French along the Chemin des Dames and drove toward the Marne River before the Allies could halt the attack. The *Gneisenau* attack advanced the flanks of the Marne salient created by *Blücher*, but made few gains otherwise.

Despite their apparent initial successes, the German Spring Offensives planted the seeds of Germany's ultimate defeat. Each attack increasingly overextended the German front lines, straining their manpower and lines of communication. Casualties were also severe, with the best-trained and most experienced units suffering the highest losses—a total of over a million men between March and July 1918. Moreover, the German offensives pushed the Allies to take certain corrective measures to improve the efficiency of their collective war effort. First, on 26 March, they appointed France's General Ferdinand Foch as the "generalissimo" of all Allied forces on the Western Front, with the official title of General in Chief of the Allied Armies and the authority to coordinate Allied


Antwerp
Dunkerque
Calais
Yser R
Ypres
Passchendaele
FLANDERN
SYL
Ghent
BRUSSELS
GHENT
ANTWERP-MEUSE
Lys R
Lille
Mons
WOTAN
HERMAN
Arras
Aulnoye
Abbeville
Doullens
Cambrai
Somme R
Amiens
St. Quentin
Guise
Hirson
FREYA
Mézières
SIEGFRIED
HUNDING
Cantigny
Montdidier
Noyon
Laon
BRÜNHILD
ALBERICH
Aisne R
Rethel
Beauvais
Soissons
AISNE-VESLE
Oise R
Reims
Ourcq R
Vesle R
Marne R
Seine R
Château-Thierry
PARIS
Châlons
Marne R
Seine R
F R A N C E
Melun
Seine R
Fontainebleau
Troyes

Map 1


WESTERN FRONT
1 September 1918
Front Line
German Defensive Line
ELEVATION IN METERS
0
200
400
8 00 and Above
0
50 Miles
0
50 Kilometers
NETHERLANDS
B E L G I U M
Liège
Meuse R
Namur
Coblenz
Forêt des Ardennes
GRENZE
LUXEMBOURG
Trier
Sedan
Arlon
Meuse R
Kaiserslautern
KRIEMHILDE
Verdun
Forêt d'Argonne
Metz
G E R M A N Y
HAGEN
METZ-STRASBOURG
St. Mihiel
Seicheprey
Meuse R
Bar-le-Duc
Nancy
Lunéville
Moselle R
Rhine R
Strasbourg
Marne R
Neufchâteau

military operations. Foch's appointment brought a unity of effort that had been sorely lacking among the Allies since 1914.

The crisis created by the German Spring Offensives also affected Pershing's plans for the AEF. Soon after *Operation Michael* began, Pershing pledged to provide forces to the Allies to help during the emergency. He also approved sending American divisions into combat before they had completed their training. The American 1st, 2d, and 3d Divisions, among others, were soon rushing toward the front, where they would engage the Germans at places such as Cantigny, Belleau Wood, and Château-Thierry. Pershing also agreed to allow the British to ship American infantry and machine gun units to France at an increased rate. When combined with improvements in the War Department's mobilization system, these steps enabled the United States to deliver as many as 10,000 soldiers a day to France by June 1918. By the end of May, as per their agreements with the British, infantry units from nine American divisions were training with the BEF—artillery units continued to train with the French—under the administrative control of the American II Army Corps. A further eight American divisions were either training with the French or entering the line, and four African American regiments from the 93d Division were permanently attached to French units.

The arrival of American forces in the trenches allowed the French and British to move veteran units to critical points where they could block the German advances. With the Allied lines stabilizing, Foch began looking for an opportunity to shift to the attack. The most tempting target was the massive salient created by *Blücher*. Foch and the commander of the French Army, General Henri Philippe Pétain, began making plans and redeploying their forces while they waited for the next German attack. The final German offensive, *Marneschutz-Reims* (15–17 July), proved to be the turning point of the war. In what collectively would be known as the Second Battle of the Marne (15 July–6 August), the Allies withstood the initial German attacks and then seized the initiative with a massive counterattack.

As the battle raged, Foch laid out a plan for the coming months that would put the Allies in position to launch a Grand Allied Offensive in the fall. On 24 July, Foch met with Haig, Pétain, and Pershing and outlined a series of offensives intended to relieve pressure on Allied rail networks by reducing three German salients along the Western Front. With an operation already underway against the Marne salient, Foch requested that Haig begin

preparations for eliminating the salient near Amiens in August. Considering that five American divisions were still in the British section of the line, Haig undoubtedly would use these units in the coming offensive. Meanwhile, Pershing and the AEF would start planning an attack against the St. Mihiel salient to be launched in early September. Once they reduced the salient, Foch envisioned the Allies going on the offensive across the entire Western Front, along with possible operations on other fronts. Thus, American units were intermixed along the Western Front from Flanders to Lorraine at the beginning of August 1918 as the Allies prepared to launch a series of offensives that would prove to be the endgame of the First World War. (*See Map 1.*)

Operations

A Case Study in Amalgamation: Hamel (4 July 1918)

Even though well over a hundred thousand Americans were training with the BEF by the early summer of 1918, it was by no means certain that the American forces would contribute to combat operations within the British sector. As of the beginning of July 1918, the AEF's involvement in active combat operations on the Western Front had been limited to engagements within French sectors. Some American elements attached to British units had been drawn into combat, but this generally had happened on an ad hoc basis. Many within the BEF were suspicious of American combat prowess. However, the Battle of Hamel on 4 July would show the British not only that the Americans could fight, but also that they could be integrated effectively into a British set-piece operation.

In late June, General Sir Henry S. Rawlinson's British Fourth Army began planning a series of limited counterattacks intended to improve its position in preparation for a major counteroffensive later in the year. One obvious target was the German salient around the village of Hamel. The village's position on elevated ground almost twenty kilometers to the east of Amiens allowed German artillery observers to direct fire onto the British lines of communications around the city. A limited attack to seize the village and its environs would not only hamper German artillery observation but also give Allied forces an unimpeded view of the Somme valley. Moreover, an attack would test the strength and morale of German forces in the area, indicating whether a larger offensive would be likely to succeed.

Rawlinson ordered General John Monash's Australian Corps to take Hamel. With his command roughly 2,000 men understrength, Monash looked to the newly arrived Americans to augment his force. At that time, Maj. Gen. George Bell Jr.'s 33d (Prairie) Division, consisting of National Guardsmen from Illinois, was training behind the British lines near Amiens. The division was under the administrative control of the American II Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. George W. Read. Seeing the value of exposing his green troops to combat alongside veterans, General Bell selected four companies to take part in the Australian attack. Companies C and E of the 131st Infantry, and Companies A and G of the 132d Infantry, broke into their constituent platoons for incorporation into Australian units, with about forty to fifty men from each American company going to battalion reinforcement camps. On 30 June, Read and Bell agreed to expand American participation in the attack to include six additional companies from the 131st Infantry. (*See Map 2.*)

The Americans reacted positively to this limited experiment in amalgamation with a foreign army. One soldier from the 33d Division recorded his impression that the Australians "appeared to be more akin to our class in that they were an independent, alert, energetic lot of men and splendid fighters. From the first when our soldiers came in contact with them they mixed well and took kindly to each other." The Australians reciprocated this sentiment. An Australian war correspondent's description of an encounter with American soldiers, for example, is quoted in the Australian official history of the First World War:

> we felt to-day as though we had been walking amongst ghosts. Wherever one goes one is struck more and more by the likeness of these men, amongst whom we have been moving, to the men of the old 1st (Aust.) Divn. at Mena camp and behind the lines in Gallipoli . . . the sight of them took one back at one jump to the picture of many a little group . . . on the desert at Mena and behind the lines at Anzac, gathered around our own machine-guns in the days when the machine-gun was a new toy, more or less. There was the same quiet over-seriousness about their work.

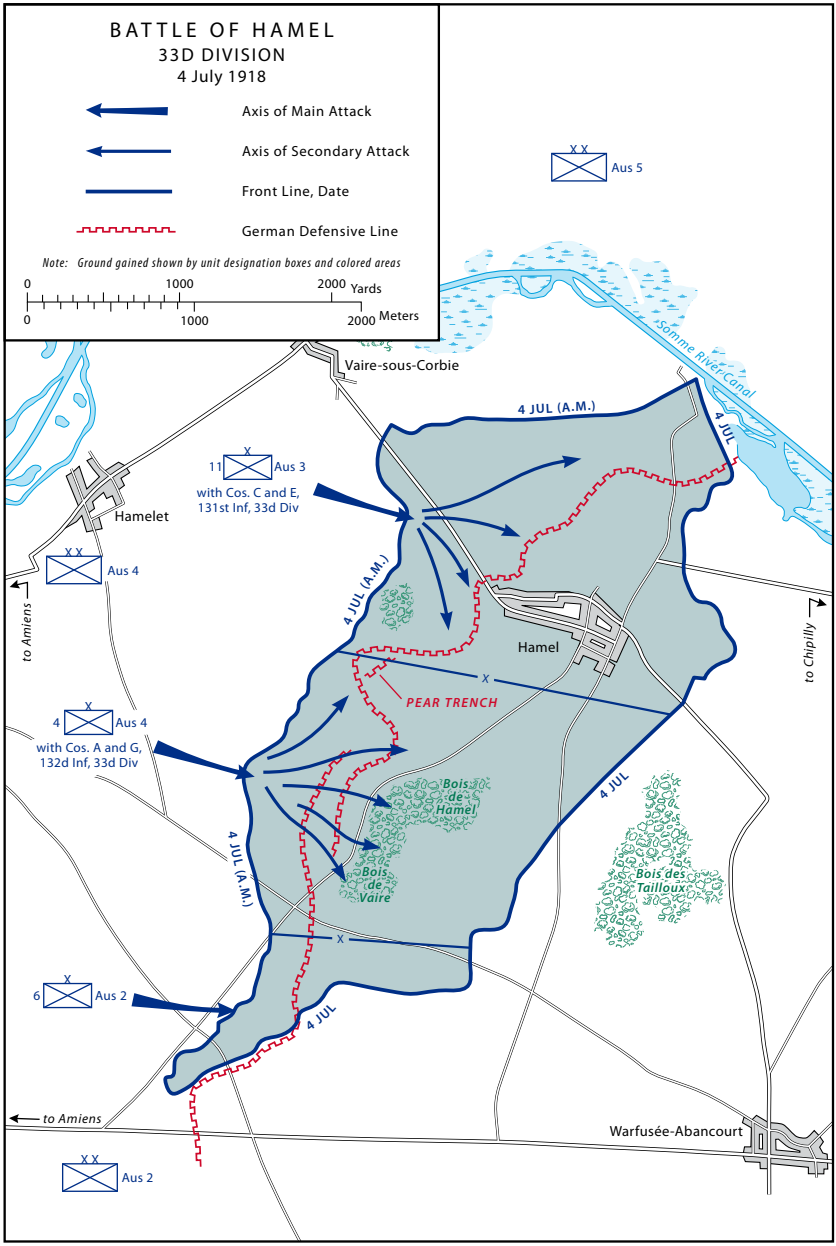
Despite the warm feelings between the two groups, outside interference nearly scuttled the attempted amalgamation of American and Australian forces. During a visit to the II Corps headquarters on 1–2 July, General Pershing learned of the planned

attack on Hamel and instructed Read to withdraw the American companies. A consistent opponent of amalgamation, Pershing believed that the joint operation "showed clearly the disposition of the British to assume control of our units, the very thing I had made such strong efforts and had imposed so many conditions to prevent." For unknown reasons, Read and Rawlinson withdrew only six of the ten American companies assigned to the operation, pulling them out of the front lines on the morning of 3 July. Pershing made another intervention later that day, reiterating his orders to Read over the telephone.

Informed of Pershing's instructions, Monash worried that removing the AEF troops at the last possible minute would sour Australian-American relations and lead to unnecessary casualties. He voiced these concerns to General Rawlinson only hours before the scheduled start of the attack. Rawlinson recognized that backing Monash could jeopardize Anglo-American relations, and possibly his own career. Asked whether preserving the AEF component in the operation was "worth it," Monash responded that he considered it "more important to keep the confidence of the Americans and Australians in each other than to preserve even an Army commander." Monash's conviction impressed Rawlinson, and he resolved to support his general on the issue, even if Haig disagreed. In the end, however, the looming clash never materialized; Haig telephoned Rawlinson at 1900 to relay his solidarity with the Fourth Army's views. Considering the time pressures, Haig opted to essentially ignore Pershing's objections, authorizing the attack to go ahead as planned.

As Monash's men made their final preparations, Royal Air Force (RAF) night bomber squadrons began striking German billets near Hamel at 2300 on 3 July before the full assault planned for the next day. Shortly before zero hour*—0310 on 4 July 1918—the infantry companies of the 33d Division consumed the customary British rum ration and assembled at their starting positions, as British artillery fired concentrations of smoke in front of the German lines. Simultaneous fire from over 600 artillery pieces and 100 machine guns unleashed against the German front line signaled the opening of the attack. Receiving the order to advance, the infantry rose and moved through the darkness, following white tape guides stretched along paths leading up to the

* A British military term denoting the time of an attack, equivalent to the U.S. military's "H-hour."


BATTLE OF HAMEL
33D DIVISION
4 July 1918
Axis of Main Attack
Axis of Secondary Attack
Front Line, Date
German Defensive Line
Note: Ground gained shown by unit designation boxes and colored areas
0 1000 2000 Yards
0 1000 2000 Meters
XX Aus 5
Somme River-Canal
Vaire-sous-Corbie
4 JUL (A.M.)
4 JUL
11 X Aus 3
with Cos. C and E, 131st Inf, 33d Div
Hamelet
XX Aus 4
to Amiens
4 JUL (A.M.)
Hamel
to Chipilly
X
PEAR TRENCH
4 X Aus 4
with Cos. A and G, 132d Inf, 33d Div
Bois de Hamel
Bois de Vaire
Bois des Tailloux
4 JUL
4 JUL (A.M.)
X
6 X Aus 2
4 JUL
to Amiens
Warfusée-Abancourt
XX Aus 2

Map 2

King George V decorating a soldier from the 33d Division
(National Archives)

German wire. The percussion of outgoing artillery and the snarl of British aircraft engines passing overhead masked the rumble of tanks lumbering into position behind the men. In front of the attacking infantry lay the shattered trees of the Bois de Vaire, the ruined buildings of Hamel, and some 3,000 Germans of the *43d Reserve* and *13th Westphalian* divisions.

As the attackers emerged out of meter-high wheat, a creeping barrage pulverized the German first-line positions. Within four minutes, the artillery shifted forward about ninety meters, continuing to advance at regular intervals to lead the infantry attack. Capt. Carroll M. Gale's Company C, 1st Battalion, 131st Infantry, advanced quickly, never straying more than seventy meters from the falling shells, which covered their advance into the German lines. Unfortunately, the rolling barrage was not uniformly effective. Company G, 2d Battalion, 132d Infantry, also attempted to keep close to the barrage but suffered forty-two casualties, including twelve deaths, when several artillery rounds fell short. Whenever American officers were hit, Australian officers or noncommissioned officers (NCOs) stepped in to lead the troops forward.

Although the advance overcame most of the German defenses, the attackers encountered the heaviest resistance at a point

called "pear trench." So named because of its shape, this position lay hidden in a depression several hundred meters in front of the Allied jump-off line. Its location enabled it to weather the Allied artillery barrage, forcing the infantry to clear the area with small-arms fire, grenades, and hand-to-hand fighting with bayonets. Other strongpoints fell thanks to support from the sixty tanks of the British 5th Tank Brigade, which included Mark V and Mark V* ("Mark Five-Star") heavy tanks, lighter Medium Mark A "Whippet" tanks, and twelve supply tanks carrying ammunition for the infantry.

By about 0445, the British, Australian, and American troops had taken all their objectives. The operation cost the Allies some 1,400 casualties, with the 33d Division sustaining a total of 39 killed and 196 wounded. The Germans lost 2,000 men, a large quantity of supplies, and their crucial artillery observation position overlooking the railroad junction of Amiens. The success of the Hamel assault bolstered the confidence of the AEF, and numerous British commanders sent telegrams to General Bell expressing appreciation for his division's courage and adaptability. On 11 August 1918, King George V personally awarded four Military Crosses, four Distinguished Conduct Medals, and eight Military Medals to American officers and enlisted men who had fought in the battle.

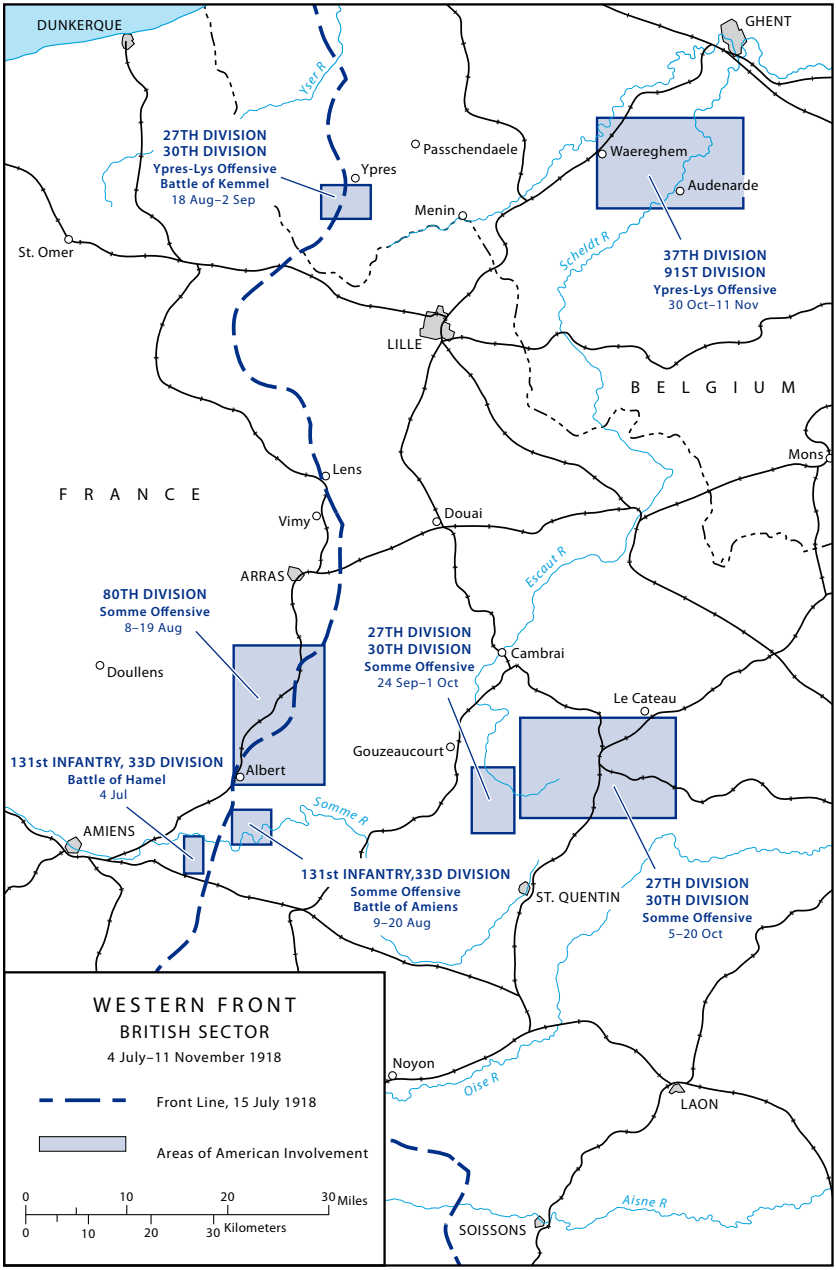
The Battle of Amiens (8–23 August 1918)

Within twenty-four hours of the Hamel operation, Rawlinson's headquarters began preparing for a major offensive against the German salient near Amiens, utilizing a force composed mainly of the British III Corps, the Australian Corps, the Canadian Corps, and the Cavalry Corps. Haig accepted Rawlinson's proposal on 17 July, and Foch approved the plan at a meeting of the Allied commanders in chief a week later. Although Rawlinson originally intended the battle to be a purely British operation, Foch proposed that General Marie-Eugène Debeney's French First Army—placed temporarily under the control of the British General Headquarters (GHQ)—support the southern flank of the attack with a drive along the line of the Avre River toward Roye. The plan envisioned an advance of approximately six-and-a-half kilometers on the first day. Rawlinson and Debeney conceived of the offensive as a combined-arms battle along the lines of the attack at Hamel, but on a much larger scale.

Preparations took place in the strictest secrecy. General Sir Arthur Currie's Canadian Corps moved sixty kilometers from the zone of the British First Army to Amiens in only a few days, with some heavy artillery brigades arriving at the last minute on 5–6 August. Some of the Canadian Corps' wireless sections and casualty clearing stations deployed in the zone of the British Second Army—a measure that misled German intelligence as to the location of one of the largest and most experienced units in the BEF. The Canadian Corps' divisional commanders only learned of the attack's objectives on 29 July. Other preparations were equally meticulous. By 8 August, a total of 534 tanks and 1,904 aircraft, as well as thousands of guns and massive stockpiles of ammunition, had been gathered for the attack.

At 0420 on 8 August, roughly 3,700 British and French guns opened fire while seven Allied divisions—aided by the cover of fog—assaulted the German positions around Amiens. Because no preliminary bombardment preceded the attack, the Allies took the Germans by surprise. The artillery barrage severed the German lines of communication, and Allied infantry isolated and overwhelmed many enemy frontline positions. RAF squadrons strafed supply columns while accurate counterbattery fire silenced the German artillery. By the end of the day, Allied troops had advanced over twelve kilometers on a twelve-kilometer-wide front, inflicting 23,000 German casualties and capturing 400 artillery pieces at the cost of only 9,000 casualties. The assault left General Ludendorff—who had recovered his nerve somewhat after the Allied successes in the Second Battle of the Marne—utterly disheartened. He later declared the Allied offensive at Amiens "the black day of the German Army in the history of this war."

Even though the Allies made significant gains on the first day, not everything went smoothly. Of the 456 Allied tanks that entered the battle on 8 August, only 155 remained operational by the following day. By 11 August, that number had dwindled to thirty-eight. Although tanks were an important factor in the success of the Allied attack, they suffered from myriad technical problems, proved vulnerable to artillery fire, and quickly wore out their crews. Furthermore, two of the main objectives of the attack—the villages of Chaulnes and Roye—remained in enemy hands. Foch and Haig pressed to continue the battle to reach these deeper objectives, but German resistance strengthened as the Allies lost the element of surprise and had to contend with overextended lines of communication (*Map 3*).


DUNKERQUE
GHENT
Yser R
27TH DIVISION
30TH DIVISION
Ypres-Lys Offensive
Battle of Kemmel
18 Aug–2 Sep
Passchendaele
Ypres
Waereghem
Audenarde
Menin
St. Omer
Scheldt R
37TH DIVISION
91ST DIVISION
Ypres-Lys Offensive
30 Oct–11 Nov
LILLE
B E L G I U M
Mons
Lens
F R A N C E
Vimy
Douai
Escaut R
ARRAS
80TH DIVISION
Somme Offensive
8–19 Aug
27TH DIVISION
30TH DIVISION
Somme Offensive
24 Sep–1 Oct
Cambrai
Doullens
Le Cateau
Gouzeaucourt
131st INFANTRY, 33D DIVISION
Battle of Hamel
4 Jul
Albert
Somme R
AMIENS
131st INFANTRY,33D DIVISION
Somme Offensive
Battle of Amiens
9–20 Aug
ST. QUENTIN
27TH DIVISION
30TH DIVISION
Somme Offensive
5–20 Oct
WESTERN FRONT
BRITISH SECTOR
4 July–11 November 1918
Front Line, 15 July 1918
Areas of American Involvement
0 10 20 30 Miles
0 10 20 30 Kilometers
Noyon
Oise R
LAON
Aisne R
SOISSONS

Map 3

During the offensive, the American 33d Division operated as part of the British Fourth Army, serving as a reserve for General Sir Richard H. K. Butler's British III Corps. The III Corps' initial attack on Chipilly on 8 August failed, partly because a limited German advance on 6 August had pushed the corps back from its original jump-off line. Well-sited machine gun positions on and around Chipilly Ridge also hindered the Allied advance, and General Frank W. Ramsay's British 58th (London) Division was unable to secure Gressaire Wood. Needing fresh troops to continue the attack, Butler received permission from General Rawlinson to continue the next day with the 33d Division's 131st Infantry regiment, commanded by sixty-three-year-old Col. Joseph B. Sanborn, an Illinois National Guardsman who had served in the War with Spain two decades before.

The hasty deployment of the 131st out of the Fourth Army's reserve caused considerable confusion, necessitating an overnight march of almost thirty kilometers. After several delays, the 131st Infantry—placed in the center of the 58th Division—launched its attack at 1730 on 9 August in the direction of Gressaire Wood. A rolling barrage accompanied the troops, but heavy fire from German guns concealed among the trees significantly slowed the advance. The Americans silenced the gunners after about ninety minutes, driving the Germans off the northern end of Chipilly Ridge. One German regimental commander abandoned his command post—complete with maps, telephones, and papers—to the advancing American infantry.

Even as the Germans on the northern part of Chipilly Ridge fell back or surrendered, the ones on the southern end of the ridge and in the village resisted stubbornly, holding up the 1st Battalion, 131st Infantry, and the British 10th Battalion, London Regiment. After several hours of hard fighting, the southern portion of Gressaire Wood fell, and the 4th Australian Division immediately to the south attacked across the Somme River and seized the village of Chipilly. German artillery continued to fire throughout the evening of 9 August, with poison gas spoiling the Allies' rations before they could be distributed. The 131st continued to fight alongside the Australians the next day, and American snipers and light machine gunners—equipped with the Lewis gun, an American-designed automatic rifle employed mainly by the British Army—cut down several German machine gun teams attempting to set up firing positions on the left flank of the Allied advance. By 0600 on 10 August, Colonel Sanborn reported all objectives taken. Infantry

belonging to the 4th Australian Division leapfrogged the American position late on 10 August, leaving the 131st Infantry to hold the ground gained the previous day.

After this brief interlude, the 131st Infantry was attached temporarily to an ad hoc Australian force commanded by General Evan A. Wisdom for an attack on the town of Étinehem. Advancing over a kilometer to the northeast—together with the Australian 13th Brigade, as well as other attached units—the 131st Infantry seized its objectives by 0600 on 11 August, helping to capture sixty German prisoners, including one officer. After this success, the regiment remained in the line until the night of 19–20 August, participating in local actions and assisting Australian troops in organizing captured positions. On 20 August, the 131st Infantry withdrew to Hamel. During its eleven days in the line, the 131st captured 700 prisoners, thirty artillery pieces, one aircraft, and over 100 machine guns.

While elements of the 33d Division supported British and Australian attacks near Amiens, the American 80th (Blue Ridge) Division—a National Army unit of men drafted from Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia, and commanded by Maj. Gen. Adelbert Cronkhite—saw service with the British Third Army near Arras. Shortly before the battle of Amiens, the 80th Division's four infantry regiments were parceled out among British divisions between Albert and Arras. German activity in the sector was relatively light, although the Americans repulsed several trench raids. The Allied advance at Amiens compelled the Germans to pull back their lines in many locations, including the front held by the 317th Infantry at Hébuterne. From 14 to 18 August, the regiment, along with seasoned troops of the New Zealand Division, pursued the retreating Germans for almost two-and-a-half kilometers through desolate and shell-pocked ground, taking the towns of Serre-lès-Puisieux and Puisieux-le-Petit. By 23 August, Pershing had withdrawn both the 33d and 80th Divisions from the II Corps for service in the American sector. The 80th Division incurred 274 casualties while serving with the British. The 33d Division's casualties amounted to roughly 1,400 men.

Suffering on the Vesle (7–27 August 1918)

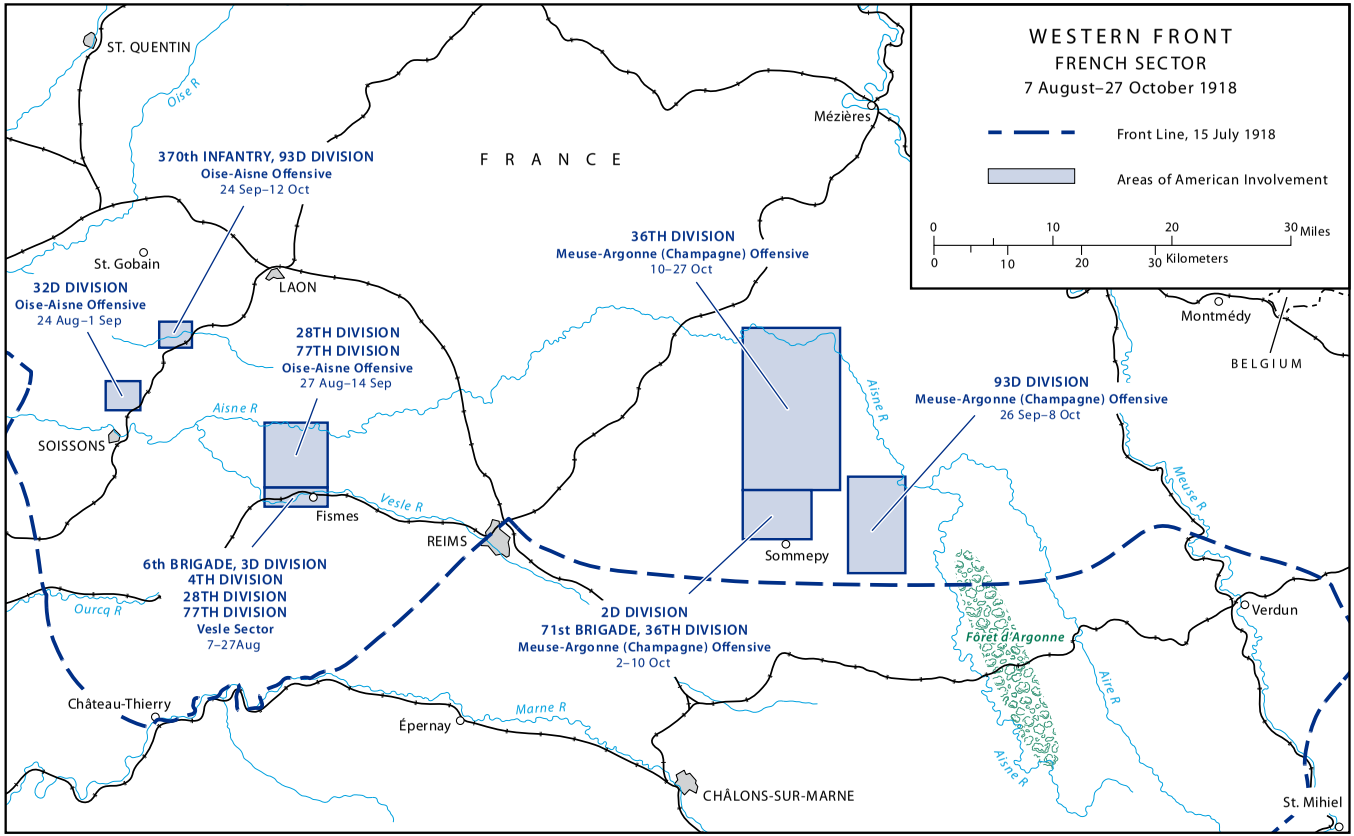
As the BEF prepared its attack at Amiens, American forces to the east had been consolidating their positions along the

Vesle River. After helping to eliminate the Marne salient over the previous three weeks, Maj. Gen. Hunter Liggett's I Army Corps and Maj. Gen. Robert L. Bullard's III Army Corps, operating as a part of the French Sixth Army under General Jean Degoutte, reorganized their forces in anticipation of resuming their drive north. On 7 August, Liggett had two divisions in line south of the river—the French 62d Division on the left and the 4th Division on the right—across from the town of Bazoches. To the east, Bullard's III Corps had the 28th Division—which had relieved the 32d Division the previous night—on the corps' left in and around Fismes, followed by the 6th Infantry Brigade of the 3d Division in the corps' center and the French 4th Division on the right. Anticipating that the German *Seventh Army* would continue to withdraw north, perhaps to the Aisne River, the Americans launched a series of advances to seize the high ground north of the Vesle. The Germans, however, dug in and repelled the Allied attacks. When the British launched their offensive at Amiens, the French Sixth Army ordered a halt to major operations and directed the two American corps to reorganize their positions for defensive operations and to establish bridgeheads across the Vesle should the opportunity arise to resume their attack (*Map 4*).

The order to consolidate positions along the Vesle was in line with the grand strategic vision of newly promoted Marshal Foch. While the British hammered away at the Germans in the Somme, Allied armies along the rest of the Western Front prepared to go on the offensive. To the west of Sixth Army, General Charles E. M. Mangin's French Tenth Army intended to launch an attack in the Oise region. To the east, the French Fourth and Fifth Armies improved their lines in Champagne. In Lorraine, General Pershing activated the American First Army on 10 August and began preparations for an assault on the salient at St. Mihiel. All across the Western Front, the British, French, and Americans were either attacking or preparing to attack the battered but still potent German forces.

In the Sixth Army's sector, Liggett and Bullard continued to adjust their units and attempt to seize bridgeheads. In the I Corps sector, the 4th Division, which had taken ground north of the Vesle on 7 August, began sending out reconnaissance patrols and reinforcing its position near Bazoches. After an unsuccessful attack on 10 August, the 4th was relieved by the 77th Division, although the 4th Field Artillery Brigade was attached to the 77th along the Vesle until 17 August. Between the end of the

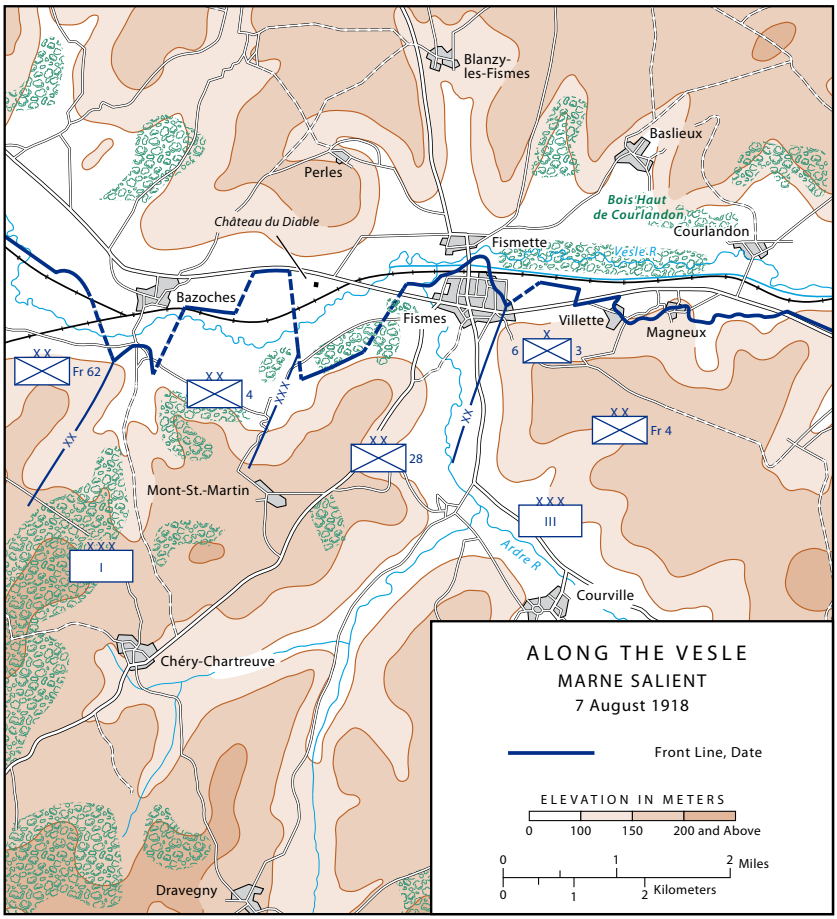
MAP 4


WESTERN FRONT
FRENCH SECTOR
7 August–27 October 1918
Front Line, 15 July 1918
Areas of American Involvement
0 10 20 30 Miles
0 10 20 30 Kilometers
ST. QUENTIN
Oise R
Mézières
FRANCE
370th INFANTRY, 93D DIVISION
Oise-Aisne Offensive
24 Sep–12 Oct
St. Gobain
LAON
32D DIVISION
Oise-Aisne Offensive
24 Aug–1 Sep
28TH DIVISION
77TH DIVISION
Oise-Aisne Offensive
27 Aug–14 Sep
36TH DIVISION
Meuse-Argonne (Champagne) Offensive
10–27 Oct
Montmédy
BELGIUM
Aisne R
SOISSONS
Vesle R
Fismes
REIMS
93D DIVISION
Meuse-Argonne (Champagne) Offensive
26 Sep–8 Oct
Sommepy
Meuse R
6th BRIGADE, 3D DIVISION
4TH DIVISION
28TH DIVISION
77TH DIVISION
Vesle Sector
7–27Aug
Ourcq R
2D DIVISION
71st BRIGADE, 36TH DIVISION
Meuse-Argonne (Champagne) Offensive
2–10 Oct
Verdun
Forêt d'Argonne
Aire R
Château-Thierry
Marne R
Épernay
Aisne R
CHÂLONS-SUR-MARNE
St. Mihiel

Aisne-Marne Offensive on 6 August and its eventual withdrawal from the sector on 15 August, the 4th Division suffered 1,829 casualties, including 362 men killed. On Liggett's right, the III Corps continued to probe the German defenses, having the 28th Division and the 6th Brigade attack across the river in Fismes, intent on taking the hamlet of Fismette on the northern bank. On 9 August, the French 164th Division replaced the French 4th Division on the corps' right flank. Two days later, Brig. Gen. Charles Crawford's 6th Brigade withdrew from the lines in anticipation of its return to the 3d Division. During their weeklong service along the Vesle, the 6th Brigade lost 132 men killed and another 548 wounded. The I Corps eventually withdrew from the line on 13 August and began moving east to join the American First Army, leaving the III Corps to hold a fifteen-kilometer front with the 28th Division on the right and the 77th Division on the left.

For much of August, the 28th Division would have the difficult task of establishing firm control of Fismette. Composed of National Guard units from Pennsylvania, the 28th (Keystone) Division was under the command of Maj. Gen. Charles H. Muir. After brutal house-to-house fighting to seize Fismes, the Pennsylvanians looked across the river to see strong German defensive positions. The Germans had removed their heavy artillery to the Aisne River, ten kilometers to the north, but they could still bombard the American line. Lighter German artillery north of Fismette constantly shelled the doughboys. The Vesle itself was swollen from recent rains to fifteen meters wide and two meters deep, with its approaches a boggy morass. The ground north of the river rose swiftly to a plateau, giving the Germans excellent vantage points and fields of fire. Roughly a kilometer west of Fismette, the Germans had turned a complex of buildings known as the Château du Diable into a massive machine gun bunker, protected by other gun positions along the wooded hillside behind it. The soldiers of the 28th Division soon renamed the sector "Death Valley."

The bloody fighting began on 8 August. Following an hour-long artillery bombardment, Brig. Gen. William Weigel's 56th Infantry Brigade sent elements of the 112th Infantry—led by Company B, 1st Battalion, with support from the 103d Engineers—across the river into Fismette. Once inside the town, the doughboys came under intense fire from German positions concealed in the ruined buildings. Within a few hours, the Germans pushed them back across the river to Fismes. At 1330 the same day, following a two-and-a-half-hour bombardment, 112th Infantry commander



Map 5

Col. George C. Rickards sent his 2d Battalion back to Fismette, where it secured a foothold in the southern and eastern portions of the town. The doughboys held out against several German counterattacks until the 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry, and the 109th Machine Gun Battalion relieved them on the night of 9–10 August. By the end of the 10th, the Americans had driven the German defenders from the rest of the town, seemingly ending the battle. Unfortunately, the Germans had no intention of permanently ceding control of such a valuable bridgehead to the Americans. The fight for Fismette was far from over (*Map 5*).

A makeshift bridge over the Vesle River, France (National Archives)

On the 28th Division's left flank, the 77th Division entered the lines on the night of 11–12 August. Filled with draftees from New York, the 77th (Metropolitan) Division was among the first of the newly created National Army divisions to enter the lines. Commanded by Maj. Gen. George B. Duncan, the division had trained with the British upon arriving in March, then served in Lorraine from late June until early August when it was transferred to Champagne for duty along the Vesle. Later, an officer of the division noted, "Lorraine was only a boxing match, but the Vesle, that was a real fist-fight." The men soon took to calling their sector "the Hell-hole Valley of the Vesle." As with the men of the 28th Division to the east, German high explosive and gas shells constantly bombarded the New Yorkers. On 13 August, after the U.S. III Corps ordered its divisions to maintain an active defense and prepare bridgeheads over the Vesle, the 77th sent out infantry patrols and reconnaissance missions near Bazoches to ascertain enemy strength and dispositions. On one such patrol, an American officer and two men stumbled upon two Germans using a shell hole as a sniper's post. A short hand-to-hand fight broke out in which the Americans wounded one German while the other escaped. Ten minutes later, American artillery covered the area in gas and high explosives in order to clear out any other concealed enemy positions. As the unit's divisional history noted, "such were the encounters in the Valley of the Vesle. It was not a struggle of masses; it was a tussle of man with man."

With operations stalled along the Vesle and with the British offensive at Amiens generally spent by 11 August, Foch called for an attack in the center of the Western Front. On 18 August, the French Tenth Army launched the Oise-Aisne Offensive by attacking in the vicinity of Noyon, sixty kilometers northwest of Fismes, to force the Germans to abandon their positions along the Aisne and Vesle rivers. With the Germans still reeling from the British attack at Amiens, the French assault caught them off guard and threatened to unhinge the entire German position in Champagne. On 20 August, the French Sixth Army ordered the III Corps to make preparations to pursue the Germans should they begin to withdraw in the face of the Tenth Army's progress. The soldiers of the 28th and 77th Divisions redoubled their efforts to secure bridgeheads across the Vesle, weathering constant German machine gun and artillery fire and repelling enemy counterattacks in the process.

On 21 August, elements of the 2d Battalion, 308th Infantry, from the 154th Infantry Brigade, 77th Division, extended their line to the east and made frontline contact with the 28th Division on the western edge of Fismes. The next day a German attack near the Château du Diable pushed the 308th back across the river. The doughboys counterattacked the next day and fought into the night without success. Relieved by the 2d Battalion, 307th Infantry, along with Company G and the Machine Gun Company of the 306th Infantry, the effort to reestablish the positions north of the river in the 154th Brigade's sector resumed on the morning of 27 August. The attack did not utilize an artillery preparation, but instead went forward behind a creeping barrage. Despite initial gains, stubborn German resistance and persistent counterattacks forced the troops of the 306th and 307th back to their start line by nightfall.

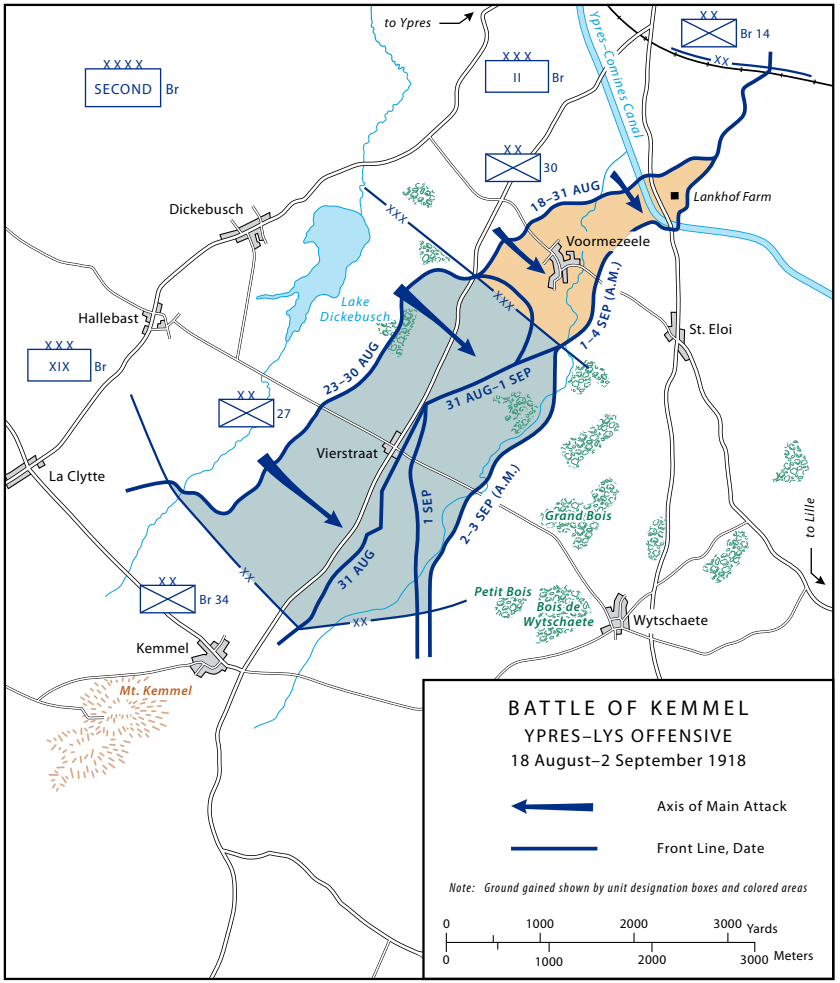
Meanwhile, the Germans continued to infiltrate back into Fismette, where the 28th Division mounted a stiff defense. Men hunkered down in basements and erected makeshift barricades and defensive positions in the village's ruined streets. At 0400 on 27 August, Companies G and H of the 112th Infantry, which had taken over positions in Fismette just thirty minutes earlier, took cover as an intense enemy box barrage began falling around the town. Within minutes, German storm troops, equipped with flamethrowers and hand grenades, infiltrated through the barrage to hit the American flanks, driving the defenders toward the center of the village. As German aircraft dropped bombs on the Americans, some doughboys tried to escape across the one remaining bridge leading to Fismes before enemy machine gunners began raking it

with fire. Of the 230 soldiers of the 112th Infantry in Fismette, 200 were killed, missing, or captured in the fighting, while the dazed survivors of the two companies made their way back across the river to Fismes. After the disaster, the 28th Division made no further attempts to take Fismette, nor did it reconstitute the two shattered companies. After weeks of fighting, the Americans on the Vesle would have to wait as events to the west began to impact the situation in their sector.

Ypres-Lys: Voormezeele and Vierstraat Ridge
(18 August–2 September 1918)

As the Oise-Aisne Offensive kicked off in the French sector on 18 August, a simultaneous Allied advance began in perhaps the most notorious section of the Western Front—the salient surrounding the medieval Flemish city of Ypres. When the trench stalemate began in late 1914, the Belgian, British, and French armies secured a defensive perimeter around the city, which they held for almost the entire war. The position around Ypres was vital strategically because it anchored the northernmost sector of the Western Front along the Belgian coast. It also served as a crucial position for BEF logistics over the English Channel. The Ypres Salient had been greatly reduced in April 1918 by the German *Georgette Offensive*, but Ypres itself remained in British hands.

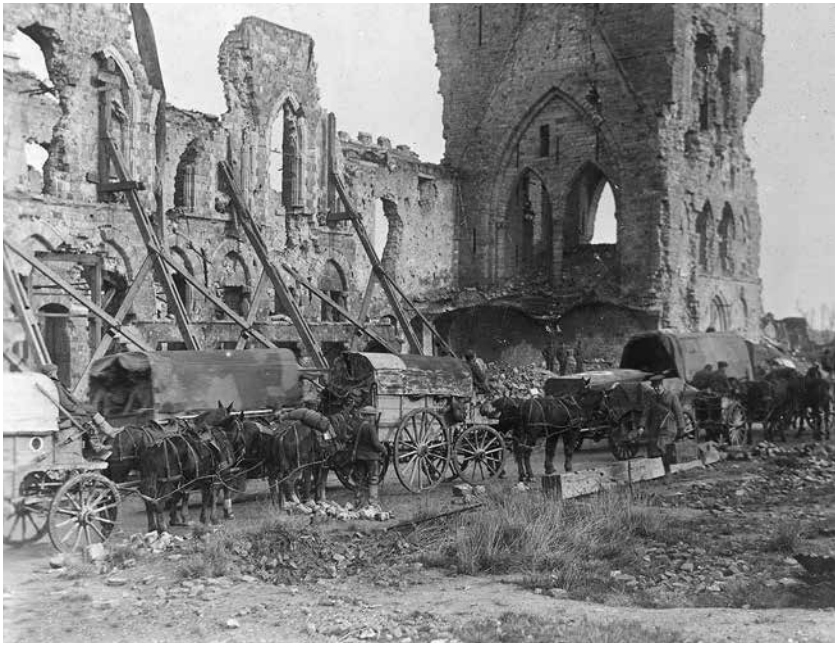
During the summer of 1918, the American 27th and 30th Divisions, both under the administrative control of General Read's II Corps, entered the line in adjoining divisional sectors approximately three kilometers southwest of the city. Both American divisions had been stationed within the British Army's area of operations since their arrival in France earlier in the summer. Unlike most divisions in the AEF, the 27th and 30th Division used British equipment and trained with British instructors. Their assignment during their first tour on an active front was to gain combat experience while supporting British operations. Maj. Gen. Edward M. Lewis' 30th Division entered the line on 18 August as a part of the British II Corps, taking over the British 33d Division's sector near the towns of Dickebusch and Voormezeele. The Ypres-Comines Canal bisected the 30th Division's left flank near Lankhof Farm. To the south, five days later the 27th Division relieved the British 6th Division at Vierstraat Ridge, where it would operate as part of the British XIX Corps. Both corps were part of General Sir Herbert Plumer's British



Map 6

Second Army. Because their organic field artillery brigades were still undergoing training in the French Army's sector, the American divisions relied on attached British units for artillery support throughout the duration of their stay in the Second Army's sector.

At the end of August both AEF divisions were poised to exploit an anticipated German withdrawal in the Ypres sector. On the morning of 30 August, dense clouds of smoke appeared over no-man's-land opposite the 27th Division—a sign that the



Ruins of the Cloth Hall in Ypres, Belgium (National Archives)

Germans were "burning dumps of some sort" to cover their withdrawal. Following instructions from the XIX Corps, Col. James M. Andrews' 53d Infantry Brigade sent out patrols toward Mt. Kemmel—a heavily contested 150-meter eminence that overlooked the terrain southwest of Ypres and the Vierstraat Ridge—to investigate the German position. The Americans quickly discovered abandoned trench works and pillboxes, confirming intelligence obtained from a German prisoner captured earlier in the day, claiming that the German position on Mt. Kemmel was weakly held. The XIX Corps therefore began preparations for a large-scale attack on Mt. Kemmel (*Map 6*).

On 31 August, the British II Corps headquarters ordered General Lewis' 30th Division to stage a probing attack on the German positions in the Ypres-Comines Canal and Lankhof Farm sectors. Mutually supporting pillboxes defended the desolate ground surrounding Lankhof Farm, so Lewis warned the 60th Infantry Brigade to fall back if it met heavy resistance. At 1030, platoon-strength patrols began a cautious advance toward the

German lines. Encountering intense machine gun fire shortly after leaving their trenches, the patrols halted until 1700, when support from artillery, machine guns, and 37-mm. guns enabled them to push on toward their objectives, which they secured by the following morning. Meanwhile, the 27th Division made a limited advance alongside the British 34th Division, taking advantage of the German withdrawal from Vierstraat Ridge. Although elements of the 105th and 106th Infantry regiments met with stiff German resistance less than a kilometer west and north of the town of Vierstraat, both regiments—supported by artillery and machine gun fire—secured their objectives by 1600. The German defensive line near Vierstraat, north of Mt. Kemmel, had been pierced.

With the Germans continuing to pull their lines back, the 30th Division advanced behind a rolling barrage the next day, taking the village of Voormezeele by 0830 and enemy positions near Lankhof Farm shortly thereafter. The 27th Division's progress on the right was less dramatic. The 106th Infantry attacked in the morning, gaining its initial objective, but stubborn resistance in the afternoon—including a local counterattack—precluded any further advance. The 106th Infantry resumed its attack on 2 September, occupying the whole of Vierstraat Ridge. Following this final advance, both American divisions withdrew from the line, concluding their active service in the Ypres-Lys sector. The 27th Division's casualties were 542 killed, wounded, and missing, while the 30th Division suffered some 476 casualties in this action. In less than a month, the two American divisions would face a more severe test in operations against the strongest defensive position on the Western Front—the Hindenburg Line.

The Assault on Juvigny (28 August–1 September 1918)

Within ten days of beginning its 18 August offensive, the French Tenth Army had driven the Germans north of the Oise and Ailette rivers, completing the operation's initial phase. The next objective was to pierce the German lines between the Aisne River and the Forêt de St. Gobain. Doing so would enable the French to advance through Terny-Sorny and Laon, making the German positions along the Vesle and Aisne rivers untenable. However, before they could move forward, the Allies needed to take the small French village of Juvigny, and for this Mangin would again call upon the Americans.

On the night of 24–25 August, the recently bloodied troops of the U.S. 32d (Red Arrow) Division boarded trucks driven by French colonial Vietnamese soldiers for transport to the lines west of Juvigny, roughly seven kilometers north of Soissons. Built around National Guard units from Michigan and Wisconsin, the division had fought in the Aisne-Marne Offensive, advancing nineteen kilometers from the Ourcq to the Vesle. The 32d's soldiers so impressed the French that they took to referring to the Americans as "Les Terribles." Led by Maj. Gen. William G. Haan, the 32d joined the French XXX Corps, operating as a part of Mangin's Tenth Army. Although many of their companies were down to 50 percent strength, the men were anxious to get back into action. On 27 August, the doughboys began filing into the trenches to relieve the mud-caked infantry of the French 127th Division, which held 2,000 meters of front between the French 59th Division on the right and French 64th Division on the left. Comparing their arrival in the lines with the July baptism of fire in the Aisne-Marne, the divisional history states that "[u]p ahead were the same rumbling guns coughing their barrages at the foe. In the summer sky was the same feverish red glare, throbbing throughout the night, as our batteries and theirs poured back and forth their deadly hates."

Situated between the Oise River to the north and the Aisne to the south, Juvigny had seen little fighting over the years and the surrounding windswept farmland offered scant cover. To facilitate operations, the men of the 32d Division's 107th Engineers converted a number of nearby limestone quarries and caves into casualty clearing stations, ammunition stores, and forward command posts. Haan initially placed the 63d Infantry Brigade, under the command of Brig. Gen. Louis C. Covell, along the front, with the 125th Infantry taking the northern section and the 126th Infantry holding the southern front. Meanwhile, Brig. Gen. Edwin B. Winans' 64th Infantry Brigade moved into reserve seven kilometers to the west (rear). At the time of the 32d's arrival, the French XXX Corps was endeavoring to reduce a small salient in its line before making a general advance against Juvigny on 29 August. Haan's men were ordered to complete the maneuver and capture the high ground to their front on 28 August. In company with the French 59th Division, the Americans needed to advance to a railroad embankment 1,000 meters ahead, leaving them roughly 800 meters west of Juvigny.

Col. Joseph B. Westnedge's 126th Infantry stepped off at 0700, advancing through thick fog that enabled the soldiers to surprise

the enemy and capture ninety-two dazed prisoners of the German *7th Reserve Division*, many of whom had no idea that American troops were in the area. Despite initial success, the advance faltered when the Germans in the Bois du Couronne launched a counterattack that hit the junction between the 126th Infantry and the French 59th Division. German artillery and machine gun fire caused the French division to fall back. As the French withdrew, the 126th Infantry's line bent back to maintain contact between the two divisions while the Americans poured enfilade fire into the advancing Germans. Unfortunately, the movement opened a gap in the center of the regiment's line. The 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry, came forward to plug the hole while French and American artillery and machine guns continued to pound away at the attackers. The counterattack soon faltered and the Germans withdrew, leaving behind their dead and wounded. The 63d Brigade took only light casualties. Even so, the holding operation throughout the day had been a test of endurance as German fire raked the American positions. Once the crisis had passed, the 1st Battalion, 125th Infantry, withdrew into support as the battalions in the 126th Infantry readjusted their lines.

With the front straightened by the evening of the 28th, the French XXX Corps was poised for the main assault on Juvigny. The plan called for a breakthrough and exploitation of the German lines using infantry and tanks supported by artillery. The 63d Brigade's two regiments would lead the assault, moving forward abreast with the aim of capturing Juvigny and the plateau of Terny-Sorny three kilometers to the east. A battalion of French FT tanks (thirty total) was to accompany the assaulting infantry, making this the 32d Division's first operation with armor. The 64th Brigade would follow behind the assault waves, ready to pass through the 63d Brigade later in the advance.

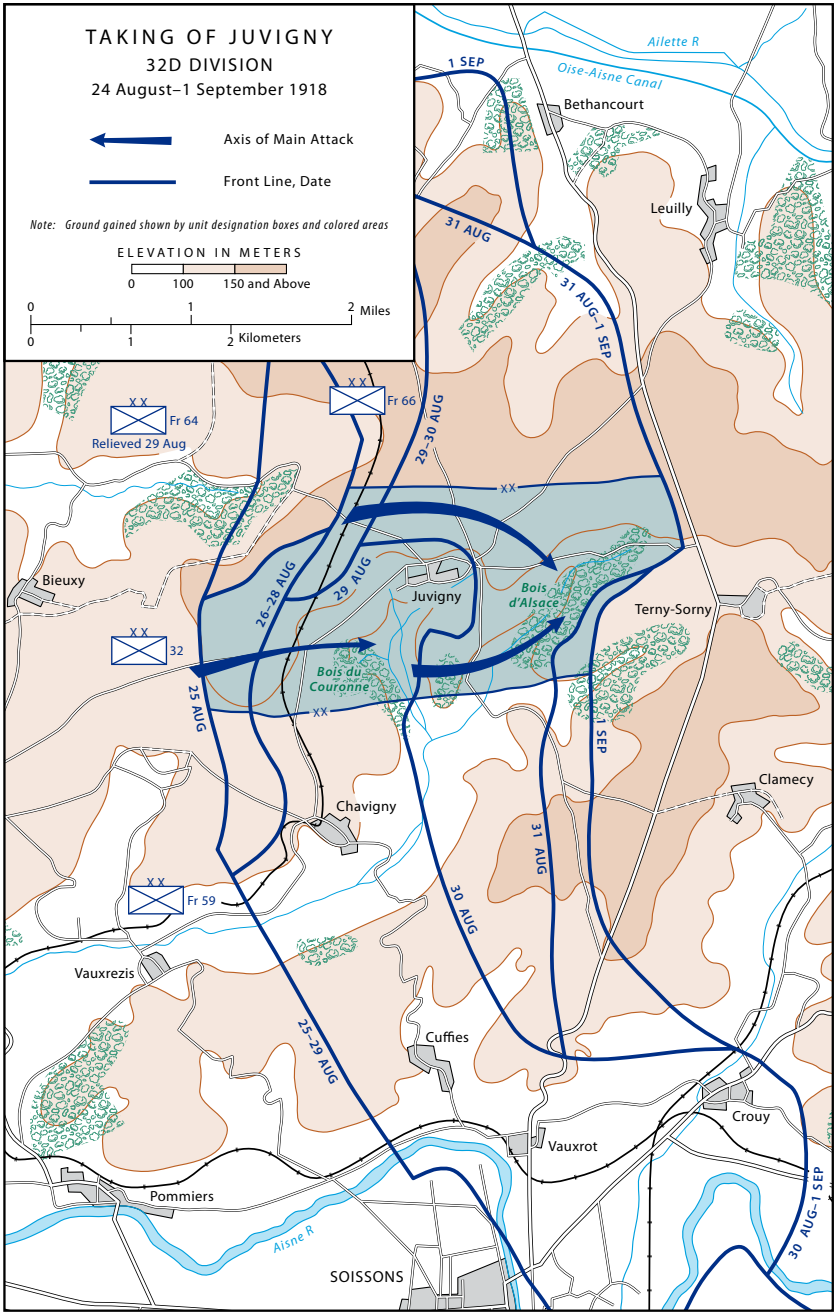
At the time of the Juvigny operation, the division's 57th Field Artillery Brigade had returned from supporting the 28th Division at Fismes. Artillery units from the French 127th and 1st Moroccan Divisions, along with the French 278th Aero Squadron, the French 29th Balloon Company, and a squadron from the French 1st Moroccan Cavalry Division, augmented the 32d. The 57th Field Artillery engaged in harassing fire against the German positions until the morning of 29 August when it put down a massive bombardment starting at 0455 across the 63d Brigade's axis of advance. The gunners shifted to a rolling barrage shortly thereafter, moving at a speed of 100 meters per minute.

German troops used the many caves in the area to take shelter from the American fire up to the time of the assault. When the 32d Division moved forward at 0525, it encountered savage machine gun fire after the Germans emerged to man their positions. Artillery also took a toll on the assault troops as a German counterbarrage crashed down in their midst shortly after the Americans stepped off in the attack (*Map 7*).

The advance achieved a partial success, as the 125th Infantry clawed forward about three kilometers before taking up defensive positions, while small numbers of the 126th Infantry eventually reached the smashed trees of the Bois du Couronne. Without support, however, heavy fire forced the surviving doughboys out of the woods, sending them filtering back to the starting line behind the railway. Although the attack enjoyed strong tank support at first, German artillery steadily knocked out the Renault FTs covering the advance, ultimately disabling the entire force.

When General Haan surveyed the front line on 29 August, he sensed the extreme stress that his men had suffered in the failed attack. Haan ordered that the division's forward positions be lightly held as an observation line. At the same time, General Covell sought permission to attack southwest of Juvigny to obtain better positions, but the French XXX Corps denied his request. The French instead ordered a renewed effort against the town the following day, as Haan sent the 64th Brigade to relieve the battered 63d Brigade in the front line. The 127th Infantry took the right flank while the 128th Infantry manned the left, each regiment placing two battalions in line and one in support. Meanwhile, to the north the French rotated the 64th Division out of the line, replacing it with the French 66th Division.

On 30 August, the 32d Division demonstrated greater initiative and maneuverability than it had the previous day. Confusion initially set in as Mangin halted the 32d's movement, fearing that the bulk of the French XXX Corps was too far behind the Americans for a coordinated advance. Luckily, however, the French 59th Division unexpectedly broke through the German defenses that morning, after which Mangin lifted his hold on the American operation and ordered the 32d to carry on to Juvigny, keeping close contact with the French on the right. At 1545, the 64th Brigade moved forward with orders to advance to the Terny-Sorny–Bethancourt road if circumstances permitted. After leaving their positions, the doughboys halted at the outskirts of Juvigny because of enemy machine-gun fire. However, troops


TAKING OF JUVIGNY
32D DIVISION
24 August–1 September 1918
Axis of Main Attack
Front Line, Date
Note: Ground gained shown by unit designation boxes and colored areas
ELEVATION IN METERS
0 100 150 and Above
0 1 2 Miles
0 1 2 Kilometers
Ailette R
Oise-Aisne Canal
1 SEP
Bethancourt
Leuilly
31 AUG
31 AUG–1 SEP
XX
Fr 66
29–30 AUG
Fr 64
Relieved 29 Aug
26–28 AUG
29 AUG
Juvigny
Bois d'Alsace
Terny-Sorny
Bieuxy
32
Bois du Couronne
25 AUG
1 SEP
Clamecy
Chavigny
31 AUG
30 AUG
Fr 59
Vauxrezis
25–29 AUG
Cuffies
Crouy
Vauxrot
Pommiers
Aisne R
SOISSONS
30 AUG–1 SEP

Map 7

from the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, were able to maneuver across the open fields west of the town and gain a position on its northeastern edge. Simultaneously, the 127th Infantry on the right flank infiltrated around German defenses through a wooded ravine, gaining positions south and east of the village.

At this point, the 32d Division clasped Juvigny like a rock in the palm of a closing fist. While elements of the 125th Infantry reinforced the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, in the face of a German counterattack from the north, the 127th Infantry breached the town's defenses that afternoon. Savage close quarters fighting with grenades and bayonets forced the Germans from their positions. After securing the town, the Americans took shelter in the rubble as a German artillery barrage crashed down on them.

By nightfall, elements of the 64th Brigade consolidated the perimeter around Juvigny while men of the 107th Field Signal Battalion established telephone lines with General Haan's headquarters. Unfortunately, the French troops to the north and south did not advance as far as the Americans, who now occupied an exposed salient. On the division's left, the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, had spread out facing north to cover the flank. Although the 32d was in a precarious position, word soon came that General Mangin would make another push with the Tenth Army on 31 August, and the 32d Division, again supported by a battalion of Renault FT tanks, would press on from Juvigny to the hamlet of Terny-Sorny. The 32d Division's artillery support for the 31 August advance included the 57th Field Artillery Brigade's seven batteries of French Schneider 155-mm. short guns, as well as the full artillery compliment of the 1st Moroccan Division, which included two batteries of the 155-mm. shorts and four batteries of Schneider 220-mm. howitzers. To take advantage of this added support, Haan and the 57th Field Artillery commander, Brig. Gen. George L. Irwin, planned what they believed would be an improved variation to the standard creeping barrage: a triple barrage.

Because the infantry often experienced difficulties maintaining pace with the typical creeping barrage, French divisions had begun to use a double barrage on enemy positions in order to neutralize defenders who emerged after the initial barrage. Although this tactic had varying degrees of success, Haan and Irwin hoped to enhance the effect by using three waves of artillery. The complex fire plan for 31 August included provisions for an initial standing barrage in front of most of the

32d Division, while to its left a creeping barrage would advance with the French 66th Division until its front reached that of the Americans. Once the lines met, the entire force would attack behind an expanded creeping barrage to capture the XXX Corps' objectives for the day.

At 1600, the combined Franco-American batteries opened fire as the French 66th Division moved out. The planned rendezvous took place at 1650 and the Renault FT tanks rattled forward as the Americans left their positions on the shattered outskirts of Juvigny. The tanks were of greater assistance to the 32d Division than they were in the previous advance; only a few had been disabled by German antitank rifles or artillery. The FT's 37-mm. cannon blasted the German machinegun positions that survived the triple barrage, while German troops retreated haphazardly along the road to Terny-Sorny. By 2000, the doughboys had captured 550 prisoners, many of whom described the intense American barrage as "crazy" and admitted that they could not tell what was happening over the course of the afternoon. However, on the southern edge of the line, German forces occupying positions in dense forests and steep ravines were able to hold out, forcing soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, to resort to stalking individual gun positions while night patrols kept the Germans at bay. The Americans continued to push forward on the right on 1 September, but word soon came that the French 1st Moroccan Division would relieve the 32d Division the following day.

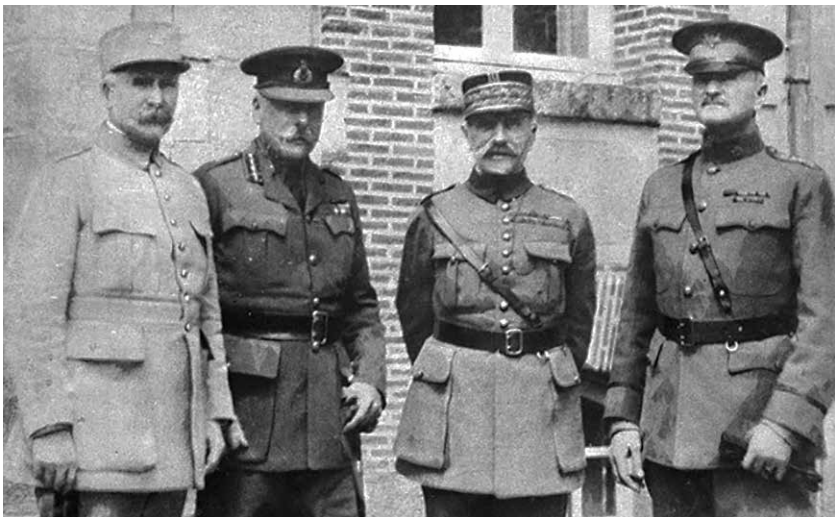
The 32d Division remained in corps reserve until 6 September, at which point it redeployed eastward for service with the American First Army. The doughboys of the Red Arrow Division could take pride in their accomplishments, as the loss of Juvigny had destabilized the German *Seventh* and *Ninth Armies* along the Vesle River, resulting in a general withdrawal on the night of 3–4 September. The 32d Division's price for the Oise-Aisne campaign was 2,781 soldiers killed, wounded, or missing. The Americans had engaged portions of five German divisions during the Oise-Aisne Campaign: the *7th*, the *7th Reserve*, the *223d*, the *237th*, and the *238th*. In appraising the 32d Division's accomplishments, General Mangin stated, "[The enemy] considered the plateau of Juvigny as the keystone of his line of defense on the west. The Americans carried it like a whirlwind. America has a right to be proud of its children, and I also am proud to have them in my Army." "Les Terribles" had validated their nickname.

Foch's Grand Allied Offensive

The advances in the Allied attacks of July–August 1918 exceeded Marshal Foch's expectations. The Amiens offensive of 8 August had dealt the Germans a particularly heavy blow, causing Ludendorff to abandon his increasingly fanciful plans for renewed offensive operations. He later wrote that the battle had "put the decline of [our] fighting power beyond all doubt." The Germans lacked adequate reserves, and could no longer reasonably hope to achieve a decisive victory. Ludendorff accordingly concluded that "the war must be ended." For the first time, he seriously considered resignation. Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and Kaiser Wilhelm II both objected, however, and Ludendorff agreed to stay on as the effective commander in chief of the German Army. The Germans resolved to continue the fight, hoping to secure at least a negotiated peace—although even this prospect now appeared doubtful.

Meanwhile, the mood in Foch's headquarters was quite different. Visiting the Château de Bombon on 3 September, the British journalist Charles à Court Repington found the generalissimo in "great form." Foch told Repington that the war would last for six more weeks at most, and announced his intention to "go on hitting" the Germans for as long as possible, illustrating his proposed strategy by shooting and stabbing an "imaginary Boche" with an invisible rifle and bayonet.

Behind Foch's display was a plan to widen the ongoing Allied offensives, one that had been in the works since early August. The scheme that the Allied commanders in chief had agreed to in July—aimed at the destruction of the German salients near Amiens, Château-Thierry, and St. Mihiel—was obsolete. That plan, Foch wrote, "answered to the situation at [the] time" that the Allies had adopted it. The scale of the subsequent Allied successes suggested the possibility of even more dramatic advances. Instead of independent attacks with limited objectives undertaken by individual Allied armies, Foch conceived a "Grand Allied Offensive" involving the Belgians, British, French, and Americans attacking on the broadest possible front. A series of heavy blows in quick succession would place extreme pressure on the exhausted, overextended Germans. The British and Belgians would attack eastward in the direction of Cambrai, St. Quentin, and the Scheldt (Escaut, in French) River, while the French continued their drive in the center toward the Aisne. The most important attack, however,

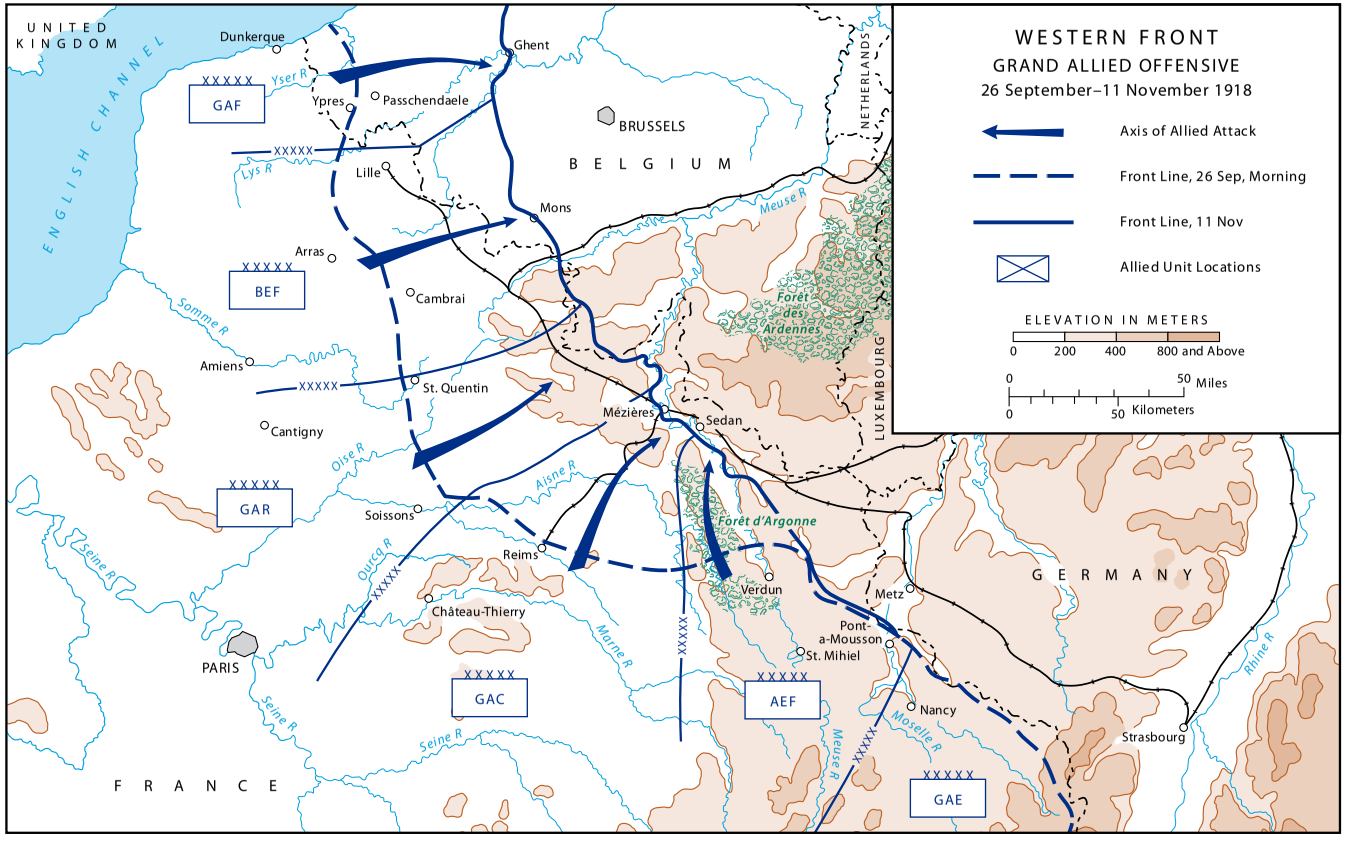


From left to right: Pétain, Haig, Foch, and Pershing
(National Army Museum, UK)

was to take place toward the eastern end of the German front, between the Meuse River and the Argonne Forest. An offensive there would threaten the principal supply artery for all German forces on the Western Front, a rail line running through German-occupied Sedan and the city of Mézières. Severing it—or even bringing it within range of Allied artillery—would render the German positions to the west untenable, forcing the Germans to withdraw to avoid encirclement and destruction (*Map 8*).

Although the offensive plan potentially could win the war, it posed several key challenges. Most notably, it required breaking through the Hindenburg Line—a heavily fortified defensive system constructed in late 1916 to cover the entire front from the English Channel to Alsace. Meticulous preparations would be needed to ensure that the Allies could penetrate the line quickly and without excessive losses. Another problem for Foch was convincing the Allied commanders in chief to go along with the idea in the first place. Securing Haig's assent, at least, would not be difficult. The BEF had pushed forward throughout the month of August, and Haig insisted on continuing the offensive into the fall. Pétain and King Albert I of Belgium were less enthusiastic, as both favored less aggressive (and thus less costly) strategies. The Belgians,

MAP 8


WESTERN FRONT
GRAND ALLIED OFFENSIVE
26 September–11 November 1918
Axis of Allied Attack
Front Line, 26 Sep, Morning
Front Line, 11 Nov
Allied Unit Locations
ELEVATION IN METERS
0
200
400
800 and Above
0
50 Miles
0
50 Kilometers
UNITED KINGDOM
ENGLISH CHANNEL
Dunkerque
Ghent
Yser R
Ypres
Passchendaele
GAF
BRUSSELS
NETHERLANDS
BELGIUM
Lys R
Lille
Mons
Meuse R
Arras
BEF
Cambrai
Forêt des Ardennes
LUXEMBOURG
Somme R
Amiens
St. Quentin
Mézières
Sedan
Cantigny
Oise R
Aisne R
GAR
Soissons
Forêt d'Argonne
Ourcq R
Reims
Verdun
Metz
GERMANY
Seine R
Château-Thierry
Pont-a-Mousson
St. Mihiel
PARIS
Marne R
GAC
AEF
Nancy
Moselle R
Rhine R
Strasbourg
Seine R
Meuse R
GAE
FRANCE

whose relatively small army could not sustain the type of pitched battles that had dominated the Western Front, had engaged in few offensives since 1914. Although Pétain had the largest Allied army on the Western Front, his experiences ending the French Army's mutinies in 1917 made him acutely aware of his limited reserves and precarious troop morale.

Both men would take some convincing. Pershing, however, was perhaps the most significant obstacle. The American First Army had come into being in early August, and its commander was adamant that his army carry out its long-awaited offensive against the St. Mihiel salient. After reducing the salient, he proposed continued offensive operations in the direction of Metz to the east in a campaign carried out entirely under American auspices. After a pair of contentious meetings in late August and early September, however, Foch secured Pershing's reluctant agreement to go along with the generalissimo's strategic plan, with the concession that the operation against St. Mihiel would go ahead, albeit on a reduced scale. After cutting the German salient, American forces would immediately redeploy to the northwest to begin the drive toward Sedan. What would become known as the Meuse-Argonne Offensive would take place under American command, although the northern drive would involve close cooperation with the French Fourth Army to the west. As with Pershing, both Albert and Pétain agreed to contribute to the Grand Allied Offensive, which was scheduled to begin in late September. The Franco-American assault toward Mézières would begin on 26 September, to be followed the next day by a BEF advance and an attack in Belgium the day after that. With all in agreement, they prepared to put the plan into action as the French kept up the pressure on the Germans.

Pursuit to the Aisne River (4–16 September 1918)

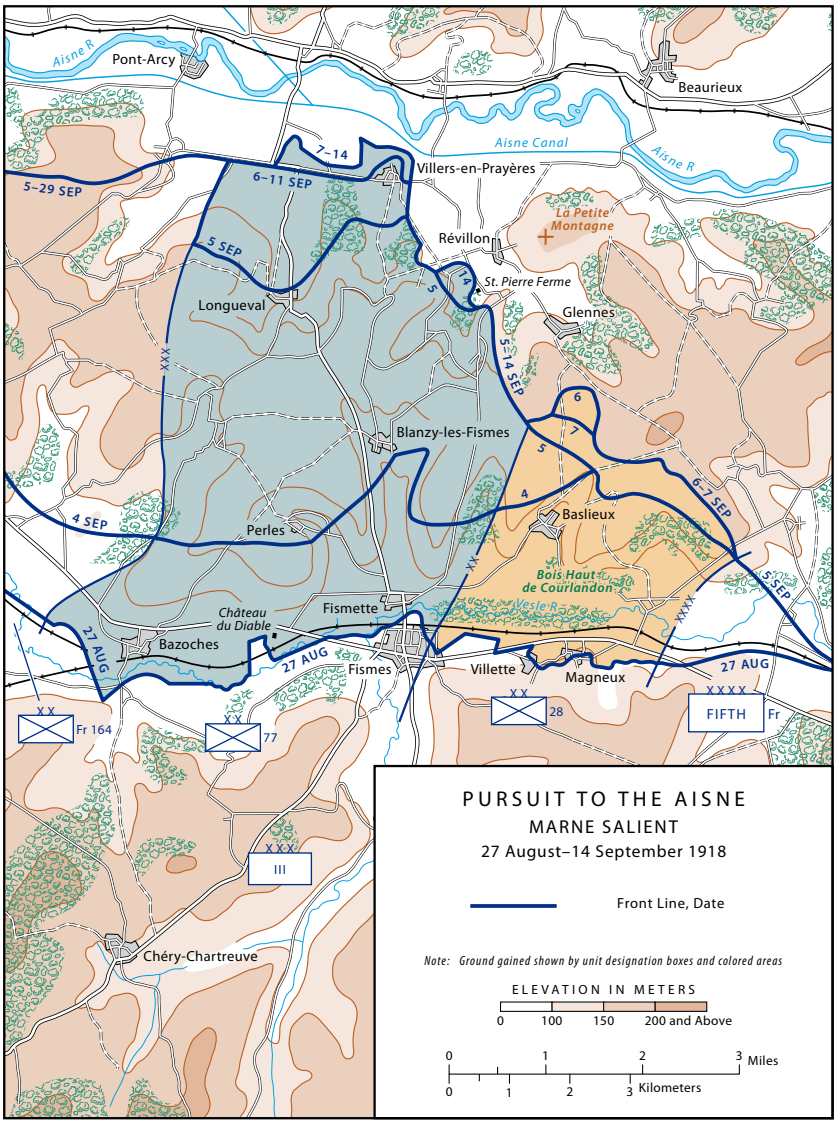
For the beleaguered Americans holding on around Fismes, the opening of the second phase of the French Tenth Army's Oise-Aisne Offensive soon brought welcome relief. As the French advanced north of Soissons, they threatened to roll up the German forces along the Vesle. The French Sixth Army again issued instructions to the III Corps to prepare for a vigorous pursuit in the event of a German withdrawal. On the night of 3–4 September, the German *Seventh Army* began a general retreat to a prepared position known as the Aisne Stellung (Aisne Position), on the southernmost portion of the Hindenburg Line.

The 77th Division's new commander, Maj. Gen. Robert Alexander, who replaced an ailing General Duncan, ordered his troops to pursue the retreating Germans. With the French 164th Division on its left flank and the 28th Division on its right, Alexander directed the 154th Brigade to advance toward the village of Perles, establishing a line just south of the town by the evening of 4 September. However, determined German resistance against the 28th Division caused Alexander to slow his division's advance in order to maintain contact. Over the next two days, the 28th Division made slow progress against stubborn rearguard machine gun nests and localized German counterattacks, fighting through the woods of the Bois Haut de Courlandon and taking the town of Baslieux by 5 September. An attack on 6 September advanced the line several hundred meters, but the division was losing strength. The 28th Division repelled several German counterattacks until it was relieved by the French 62d Division on 8 September. Since it entered the line on the Vesle in early August, the division had lost 896 men killed and 4,515 wounded.

As the 28th Division exited the lines, the 77th Division continued to take part in the French Sixth Army's push toward the Aisne River. With the French 62d Division now on its right and the French 164th Division on its left, the 154th Brigade advanced on 8 September to secure the Cochery Plateau between the towns of Révillon and Glennes. The 2d Battalion, 307th Infantry—reinforced by Companies B and C from the regiment's 1st Battalion—led the assault behind a creeping barrage. In the face of heavy resistance, Companies C, E, G, and H soon became disorganized and withdrew. Companies B and F reached the crest of the Fond de Vas, but their exposed flanks likewise forced them to withdraw. The Americans lost contact with the French 62d Division almost immediately, further hindering the brigade's movements. The ground gained by the end of the day amounted to roughly 700 meters (*Map 9*).

That night, the French Fifth Army relieved the French Sixth Army. The III Corps also withdrew from the line, leaving the 77th Division under the direct command of the incoming French XVI Corps. The Americans soon received orders to organize their sector for defense and to await an advance by French forces to the east. On 10 September, the French Fifth Army headquarters ordered the Italian 8th Division to relieve the 77th, with the 153d Infantry Brigade withdrawing on the night of 14–15 September.

In the meantime, elements of the 154th Brigade launched small attacks along the line Glennes–St. Pierre Ferme–Butte de Bourmont,



Map 9

with the goal of capturing the plateau of La Petite Montagne a kilometer northeast of Révillon. The attack began at 0515 on 14 September, with the 3d Battalion, 307th Infantry, making only limited gains. At 1000, the battalion launched a second assault,

this time with the 1st Battalion of the 307th and Company M of the 308th Infantry in support. Again they gained little ground. Later in the day, the 154th Brigade organized a mixed force of five companies—Companies C, K, and L of the 307th Infantry, and Companies I and M of the 308th Infantry—for a third attack at 1715. This time, the Americans managed to advance 500 meters to the road running north of St. Pierre Ferme. Finally, on the night of 15–16 September, the Italians relieved the remaining soldiers of the 77th Division. During the relief, a German counterattack hit the 154th Brigade, but the doughboys held back the German thrust. By the time the Americans turned over their positions, they had endured 4,771 casualties, including 809 deaths since entering the lines in mid-August. The 77th Division would soon follow the 28th Division east for service with the American First Army in preparation for the coming Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

Breaking the Hindenburg Line (24 September–1 October 1918)

In concert with the planned Allied attacks near Ypres and in the Meuse-Argonne, General Rawlinson's British Fourth Army prepared to launch the British phase of the Grand Allied Offensive: the assault on the Hindenburg Line. In the Fourth Army's sector, the Hindenburg Line—more properly known as the Siegfried Stellung—centered on the St. Quentin Canal, a broad waterway that connected the Scheldt (Escaut) River in the north to the Oise River in the south. The eighteenth-century canal—which was over ten meters wide and almost two meters deep, with perpendicular banks ranging between nine and sixteen meters in height—was the basis for one of the strongest defensive positions on the Western Front. The Germans had begun fortifying the area around the canal in late 1916, constructing an elaborate trench network in front of the canal complete with barbed-wire entanglements and concrete pillboxes.

In the northern part of the Fourth Army's sector, the St. Quentin Canal entered a tunnel that stretched more than seven kilometers between the villages of Vendhuille and Bellicourt. Having occupied the area since 1914, the Germans had converted the Bellicourt Tunnel into a massive underground installation, complete with electric lighting, air shafts, and floating barges that served as quarters for the garrison. Numerous sheltered passages allowed troops to reach defensive positions either on foot or by narrow-gauge rail. As the tunnel was a potentially vulnerable

Entrance to St. Quentin Canal tunnel near Bellicourt, France
(National Archives)

point in the German line—attacking troops could advance over the tunnel and thus bypass the canal—its defensive preparations were particularly dense. The nearby villages, including Bellicourt and Bony, were also fortified and strongly garrisoned. Yet another defensive line, the final one in the area, lay over five kilometers to the east.

General Rawlinson gave the task of leading the assault on the Hindenburg Line to the Australian Corps. An aggressive and experienced unit, by September 1918 the Australian Corps had held active sectors of the Western Front continuously for over five months. It had taken part in several major offensives, and consequently was suffering from exhaustion and low morale. Two Australian battalions recently had refused orders to return to the front line, and the British high command considered two whole divisions—the 1st and 4th Australian Divisions—unreliable. To offset the Australian Corps' perceived deficiencies, Rawlinson proposed to augment it with the American 27th and 30th Divisions,

both still under the administrative control of Read's American II Corps. Read recognized that the coming operation needed to be carried out under experienced direction and accordingly agreed to place his divisions under Monash's tactical control. Both divisions would therefore participate in the assault on the Hindenburg Line as part of the BEF's Australian Corps.

To avoid a canal crossing—which would render tanks virtually useless—Monash planned a direct assault on the Bellicourt Tunnel. The 27th and 30th Divisions would carry out the first phase of the attack on the tunnel and its perimeter defenses. Once these had fallen, the 3d and 5th Australian Divisions would leapfrog forward to continue the advance. The Australian Corps' attack was the centerpiece of Rawlinson's plan, which called for the British III and IX Corps to assault the northern and southern flanks of the St. Quentin Canal, respectively. To reduce the risk of overconcentration along the Australian Corps' axis of attack, Rawlinson also ordered the British 46th Division (part of the IX Corps) to cross over the canal to the right of the 30th Division.

The two American divisions arrived in the Fourth Army's sector on 20 September. After learning the details of the operation, General Read chose the 27th Division to strike against Bony on the left while the 30th Division breached the line on the right to capture the towns of Bellicourt and Nauroy. Preliminary operations to secure trenches and pillboxes that formed the perimeter defenses were scheduled for 27 September, before the main assault. The 30th Division entered the line under heavy shellfire, relieving the 1st Australian Division on the night of 23–24 September. The division's 118th Infantry fought off two daylight raids, the first in the late afternoon of 24 September and the second in the early afternoon of the next day, during which the Germans captured one doughboy. The day after that, the 30th Division advanced 200 to 300 meters while overrunning the German forward positions to secure a line of departure in Quarry Wood for the main attack.

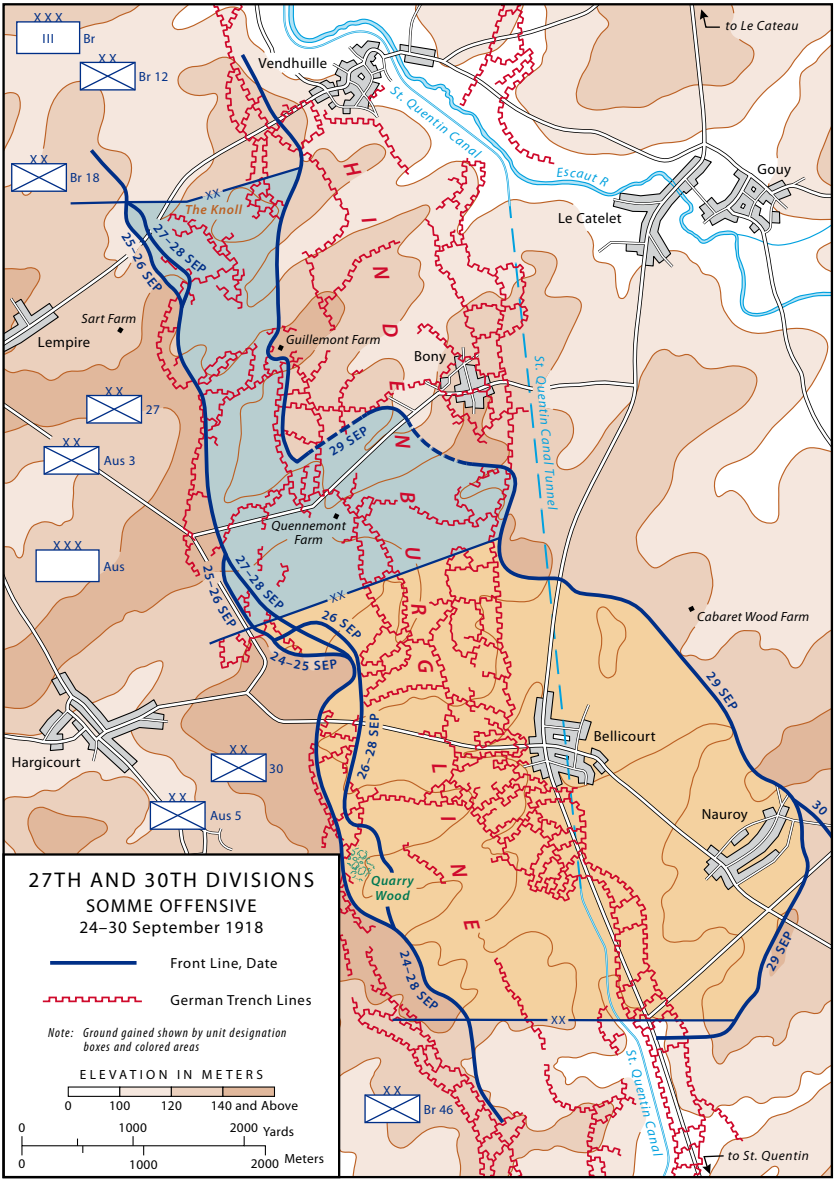
For the 27th Division, which relieved the British 18th and 74th Divisions on the night of 24–25 September, the advance to take the outer defenses near the town of Bony was a disaster. The defensive system, centered on a piece of elevated terrain called "the Knoll" as well as on Guillemont and Quennemont farms, had prevented the British III Corps from seizing the strongpoints before the American divisions went into the line. The task of capturing the positions therefore fell to the 27th Division. The 106th Infantry, along with Companies K and M of the 105th Infantry, began its

advance at 0530 on 27 September, supported by a creeping barrage, the 105th and 106th Machine Gun Battalions, and four British tanks accompanying each battalion. The infantry reached the German outer defensive line and occupied some of the forward enemy trenches, but by noon the Germans had forced the Americans to give up their initial gains. After a bitter close-quarters fight that continued into the evening, forward platoons and companies of 106th Infantry found themselves isolated and exposed to machine gun fire. By evening, many of the surviving assault troops had returned to the division's original jumping-off position, although scattered American detachments—cut off from their parent units—remained at the points they had reached during the day's fighting. The attack cost the 27th Division a total of 986 men killed or wounded, a figure including all but two of the company officers from the 106th Infantry who took part.

The next day passed without any major action as the Allied forces completed their final preparations for the main attack. The artillery plan for 29 September, like the one used two days before, called for British batteries to fire a creeping barrage ahead of the advancing infantry. In addition, a total of 162 tanks—mostly from the British 4th and 5th Tank Brigades, but also including Americans from Maj. Ralph I. Sasse's newly arrived 301st Battalion, Tank Corps—supported the assault. The 27th Division's tank support consisted of thirty-four Mark V tanks, while the 30th Division would have thirty-three tanks of the same model. Two British cavalry divisions, as well as an armored car battalion, were held in reserve. If everything went according to plan, these units would exploit the breakthrough achieved in the initial advance, harrying the retreating Germans as far as Valenciennes, almost fifty kilometers away (*Map 10*).

As in other operations, coordination of British artillery and American infantry proved challenging. Although the British had effective barrage tactics, the 27th and 30th Divisions had trained with their own artillery battalions for nine months back in the United States. Now reliant upon British artillery support, the two American divisions found themselves unfamiliar with British artillery doctrine. This fact hindered infantry-artillery coordination during the attack on the Hindenburg Line.

At 0550 on 29 September, the troops of II Corps left their trenches and advanced toward the German defenses through smoke and fog. The soldiers in the 27th Division had to overcome the strongpoints they had failed to take two days earlier. The



Map 10

107th Infantry and elements of the 105th Infantry attacked on the left toward the Knoll and Guillemont Farm. While the

108th Infantry, with a provisional battalion made up from the remnants of the 106th Infantry in reserve, advanced on the right against Quennemont Farm. From the outset, the Americans faced enfilading machine gun fire. Because the original artillery plan—which assumed that the American attack would begin from the advanced line that they had failed to secure two days before—could not be changed at the last minute, the rolling barrage started almost a kilometer ahead of the infantry and rapidly outpaced the advance. As a result, the only source of cover available to the infantry were the tanks, and German artillery knocked out most of them early in the day. As the leading battalions of the 107th and 108th Infantry continued through the fog, they became bogged down in desperate fighting over German strongpoints. The shattered maze of trenches in the division's sector quickly filled with dead and dying soldiers as the men tried to push their way through the outer German defenses, using grenades and bayonets.

The Americans enjoyed mixed success in their attempts to capture their objectives during the morning, and by noon elements of General John Gellibrand's 3d Australian Division began to leapfrog through the 27th Division's lines toward the Bellicourt Tunnel. At that time, the 105th Infantry held the Knoll, while the 107th Infantry had advanced as far as Guillemont Farm. However, Bony remained securely in German hands, and alarmingly large gaps began to open between units.

Crossing the gaps proved extremely hazardous, as Pvt. William J. Cairns and 1st Lt. Richard H. McIntyre discovered. As they followed a tank through the German wire, the two men became separated from their regiment. They engaged a pair of Germans not far from the main defensive position, capturing one and driving off the other with small-arms fire. Cairns then encountered another group of Germans, killing one and wounding two in a brief firefight. Cut off and lost, the two Americans took shelter in a shell hole with their prisoner when Cairns spotted a group of captured Americans and ran forward to rescue them. A German machine gun soon opened fire on Cairns at close range and Lieutenant McIntyre commanded him to surrender. The Germans took both Americans prisoner. Cairns later received a Divisional Citation for gallantry for his actions. Their experience epitomizes the confused and bloody fighting that took place in the 27th Division's sector throughout the day.

Many pockets of German resistance—overlooked or avoided by the advancing 27th Division—remained intact throughout the

morning and into the afternoon, and the troops of the 3d Australian Division encountered these almost as soon as they passed through the American jump-off line. As a result, the Australians were unable to push on through the American positions to their distant objective line, located almost seven kilometers beyond the Bellicourt Tunnel. Gellibrand instead committed his brigades to the fight raging in front of Quennemont and Guillemont farms, with some Australian officers taking command of now-leaderless American battalions. By the end of the day, the Australians and Americans had secured both farms, despite heavy casualties, but the Bellicourt Tunnel in the 27th Division's sector remained in German hands.

The 30th Division's assault to the south—which also began at 0550—fared somewhat better. Unlike the 27th Division, the 30th Division troops generally were able to keep under the cover of their rolling barrage. The 60th Infantry Brigade led the assault with the 119th and 120th Infantry in line from left to right, while the 59th Infantry Brigade formed the second wave of the attack. Thirty-four tanks from the British 4th Tank Brigade also took part in the advance, but those allotted to the 119th Infantry did not arrive until the regiment had already crossed the St. Quentin Canal. The 120th Infantry made it across the canal and seized the southern half of Bellicourt by 0930, continuing eastward until checked by German resistance. The 120th halted by 1100, with its 3d Battalion holding the western edge of Nauroy and the 2d Battalion situated opposite a portion of the lengthy trench line running north toward Le Catelet. The 119th Infantry, meanwhile, broke through the Hindenburg Line before 0730, but encountered strong resistance on its left flank owing to the 27th Division's failure to make progress. The 1st Battalion, 119th Infantry, took the northern portion of Bellicourt, with some troops advancing beyond to the Le Catelet–Nauroy trench, before General Sir Joseph J. T. Hobbs' 5th Australian Division leapfrogged their position in the early afternoon. The 2d Battalion, 119th Infantry, advanced as far as the Bellicourt Tunnel before being halted. The 117th Infantry, which had followed behind the 120th Infantry in support, then turned south and advanced along the canal bank until it made contact with the British 46th Division.

As the Australians began to pass through the 30th Division's positions, they found dozens of local battles in progress between American troops and isolated German defenders, who continued to emerge onto the battlefield from concealed underground

Australian soldiers who fought alongside the Americans
(National Archives)

passages. After passing through the 30th Division, the Australians proceeded to clean out Nauroy with support from elements of the 120th Infantry. Although Nauroy fell to the mixed Australian and American force, increasing German fire made the village untenable and Allied troops eventually withdrew to the Le Catelet–Nauroy trench.

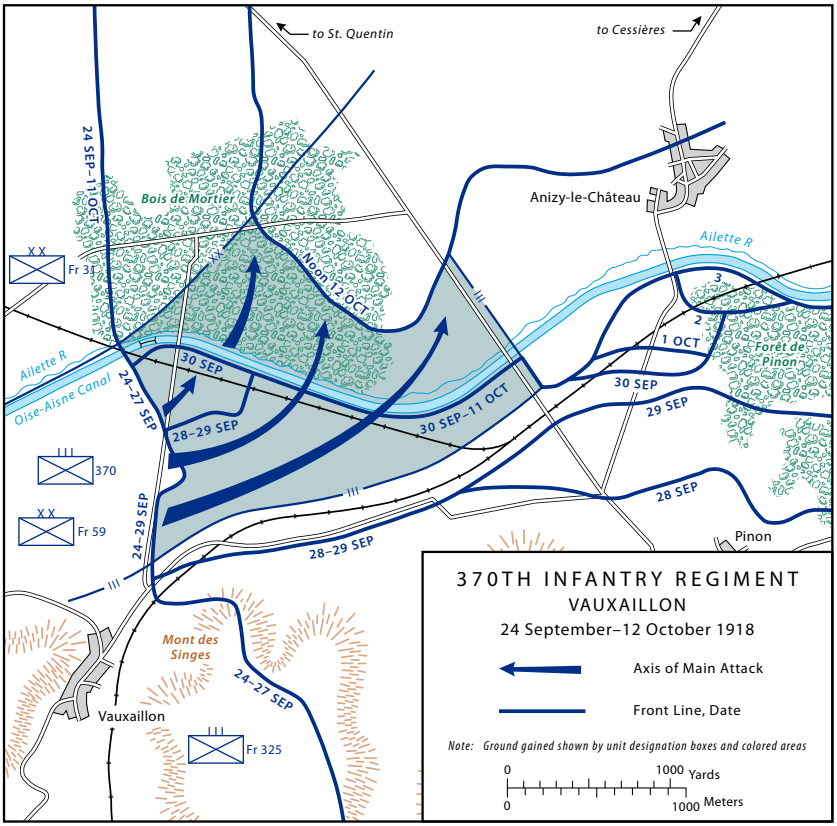
By 1 October, both the 27th and 30th Divisions had withdrawn from the front line to rest and reorganize. Although the divisions had entered combat in Flanders the month before, many of their units received their baptism of fire assaulting one of the most strongly defended positions on the Western Front. The 30th Division suffered 3,136 casualties from 21 September to 2 October. Over the same period, the 27th Division lost 4,642 men. The 107th Infantry alone suffered 349 deaths—a high casualty rate indicative of the fierce German resistance encountered during the assault on Bony. Despite the heavy American losses, the Fourth Army's attack on the Hindenburg Line was a success, and both Haig and Pershing congratulated General Read for the key role that the 27th and 30th Divisions played in the battle. In his dispatch describing

the British "advance to victory," Haig praised the "great gallantry" that the American divisions had displayed in the struggle for the Hindenburg Line.

The 370th Infantry with the French (24 September–11 November 1918)

After the 77th Division departed to join the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, the only American unit participating in the French Oise-Aisne Offensive was the 370th Infantry. An African American regiment created from the old 8th Illinois of the Illinois National Guard, it joined the 93d Division (Provisional) upon its arrival in France on 22 April. The unit had the unique distinction of having all African American officers, including its commander, Col. Franklin A. Denison. Like its sister regiments in the 93d Division, the 370th had been attached to the French for training and combat operations. During the summer, it served in the Lorraine sector before transferring to the Oise-Aisne in September. The French praised the soldiers in the 370th, but often criticized its officers. As was common for many green units during the war, several of the 370th's officers eventually were relieved—including Denison, whom Col. Thomas A. Roberts replaced in mid-July. A white Regular Army professional, Roberts would command the regiment for the rest of its service in France. During that time, he took strides to retain most of the unit's African American officers "for reasons of nationality." Although the French assigned several of their officers to the regiment to improve its military efficiency, Roberts insisted that his officers maintain their positions "since they alone have the responsibility of the troops placed to facilitate the command in all echelons." The French therefore served as advisers and assisted with liaison, but the African American officers continued to lead their men.

On its arrival near Soissons, the 370th Infantry was assigned to the French 59th Division. As part of the French XXX Corps, the division came under the direction of General Mangin's French Tenth Army, which was driving toward the city of Laon. On 16 September, the 370th moved to the vicinity of Vauxaillon, where Companies F, G, I, and L assisted in taking Mont des Singes. On 22 September, the entire regiment took over the 59th Division's left subsector and prepared to attack German defenders dug in near the Oise-Aisne Canal and the adjacent Ailette River. Reaching the south bank of the canal would require the 370th to attack northeast from their staging area near Vauxaillon and swing



Map 11

their right flank around to face the canal, which ran east-west through the sector.

With the French 325th Infantry on their right and the French 31st Division, French XVI Corps, on their left, the 370th attacked on the morning of 27 September. Progress was slow and costly as the Germans had expanded a series of natural caves in the area and constructed numerous tunnels, providing shelter from artillery fire. The men of the 370th thus had to fight at close quarters to clear out the German defenders. A lack of coordination between individual companies and poor liaison between the advancing infantry and their artillery support also resulted in heavy casualties. However, needing reinforcements to block the Franco-American offensive to the east, the *Army Group German Crown Prince* approved the withdrawal

of the German *Seventh Army* across the canal on 27–28 September. With the Germans retreating, the 370th reduced enemy strongpoints and machine gun positions south of the canal by 30 September. Patrols reconnoitered across the canal, but heavy resistance halted plans for a larger attack. On 30 September, the 370th withdrew from the front line and moved into a reserve role until 3 October (*Map 11*).

From 4 until 11 October, the 370th continued its active patrolling and prepared to cross the canal and Ailette River. On 6 October, the 59th Division passed to the control of the French XVI Corps, which made plans to advance should the Germans continue to withdraw. Because of continuing pressure from the French and American attacks in Champagne and the Meuse-Argonne, the Germans began a general withdrawal between 10 and 13 October. On 12 October, after capturing bridges south of Anizy-le-Château, the 59th Division began crossing the canal, with the 370th maintaining its position on the divisional left. By noon, the Americans had advanced about 500 meters into the Bois de Mortier before encountering strong opposition. The 370th then passed into support as the French regiments on their right continued to advance. On 13 October, the 59th Division turned over its front to the French 31st Division and shifted into the Tenth Army's reserve.

From 13 to 27 October, the 370th underwent reorganization and helped improve the roads in support of the Tenth Army's advance. After complaints made by the French commanding general of the 59th Division, General Joseph Vincendon, about the battlefield performance of the 370th, a member of General Pershing's staff inspected the regiment on 5–6 October. In his report, Maj. Lloyd R. Fredendall observed that the soldiers' morale was good and showed no sense of panic or demoralization. He did note that many of the officers appeared poorly trained in basic skills such as map-reading, leading to confusion and poor coordination with French commanders, but admitted that the terrain was exceedingly difficult and disorienting. After the war, Colonel Roberts acknowledged some of his officers' deficiencies, but felt that many of these were the result of poor training that often resulted from the Army's regulations on segregation.

On 27 October, the French Third Army relieved the Tenth Army, and the 59th Division joined the French XVIII Corps. As the Germans lost ground in the face of Allied attacks across the entire Western Front, they soon began to withdraw to a line running from Antwerp to the Meuse on the night of 4–5 November. The 59th Division took up the pursuit, with elements of the 370th

returning to the front lines by 6 November. After advancing nearly thirty kilometers, the pursuit finally halted less than ten kilometers from the Meuse River on 11 November. During its six weeks in the lines, the 370th suffered 665 casualties, including 105 fatalities.

Driving North with the French Fourth Army
(26 September–8 October 1918)

While the 370th Infantry advanced with the French Tenth Army, over a hundred kilometers to the east the remaining three regiments of the 93d Division prepared to go into battle with the French Fourth Army as part of the Franco-American drive toward the Sedan-Mézières railroad. Like the 370th, the other three predominantly African American regiments would fight as part of French divisions. The 369th Infantry, commanded by Col. William Hayward, was assigned to the French 161st Division. Formed around the 15th New York National Guard Regiment, the 369th had been in France since January 1918, initially serving in the American Services of Supply before beginning its training with the French in mid-March. In mid-July, it was heavily engaged during the Champagne-Marne Defensive. The 371st Infantry, commanded by Col. Perry L. Miles, consisted almost entirely of draftees from South Carolina and contained no African American officers. After arriving in late April, the regiment began training with the French before serving in the lines in Lorraine. The 372d Infantry—formed from National Guard battalions from the District of Columbia and Ohio, along with companies from Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Tennessee—soon joined it. Initially under the command of an African American officer, Col. Glenbie B. Young, it was soon transferred to the command of Col. Herschel Tupes, coauthor of the *Manual of the Bayonet: United States Army, 1913*. Tupes held a particularly dim view of African American officers and attempted to have them expelled from the unit.

Although the French were eager to get the three regiments into the fight, the transition was not without problems. French control meant French logistics, and the Americans had to turn over their highly accurate M1903 Springfield rifles and adopt the obsolete French Lebel Model 1886 rifle, which the soldiers found to be both "cumbersome and inaccurate." The men also handed in their American "Brodie" helmets and donned the French "Adrian" helmet. Despite these annoyances, the Americans were eager to see combat. To better integrate French tactics with

American formations, the French assigned five officers to both the regimental- and battalion-level staffs, while placing five French sergeants or corporals in each company.

By mid-September, as the upcoming offensive became apparent to all, the soldiers of the 369th, 371st, and 372d began to stock up on extra ammunition, reserve rations, and blankets. The 369th Infantry formed part of the French 161st Division, while the 371st and 372d joined the renowned French 157th Division (known as the "Red Hand"). Both divisions, along with the French 2d Moroccan Division, formed the French IX Corps under General Noël Garnier-Duplessix. The IX, II, and XXXVIII Corps comprised the French Fourth Army commanded by General Henri Gouraud. Occupying the center of the Fourth Army's sector, the IX Corps was to aid and assist the XXXVIII Corps' advance toward Grandpré, where it was to link up with the westernmost elements of the American First Army.

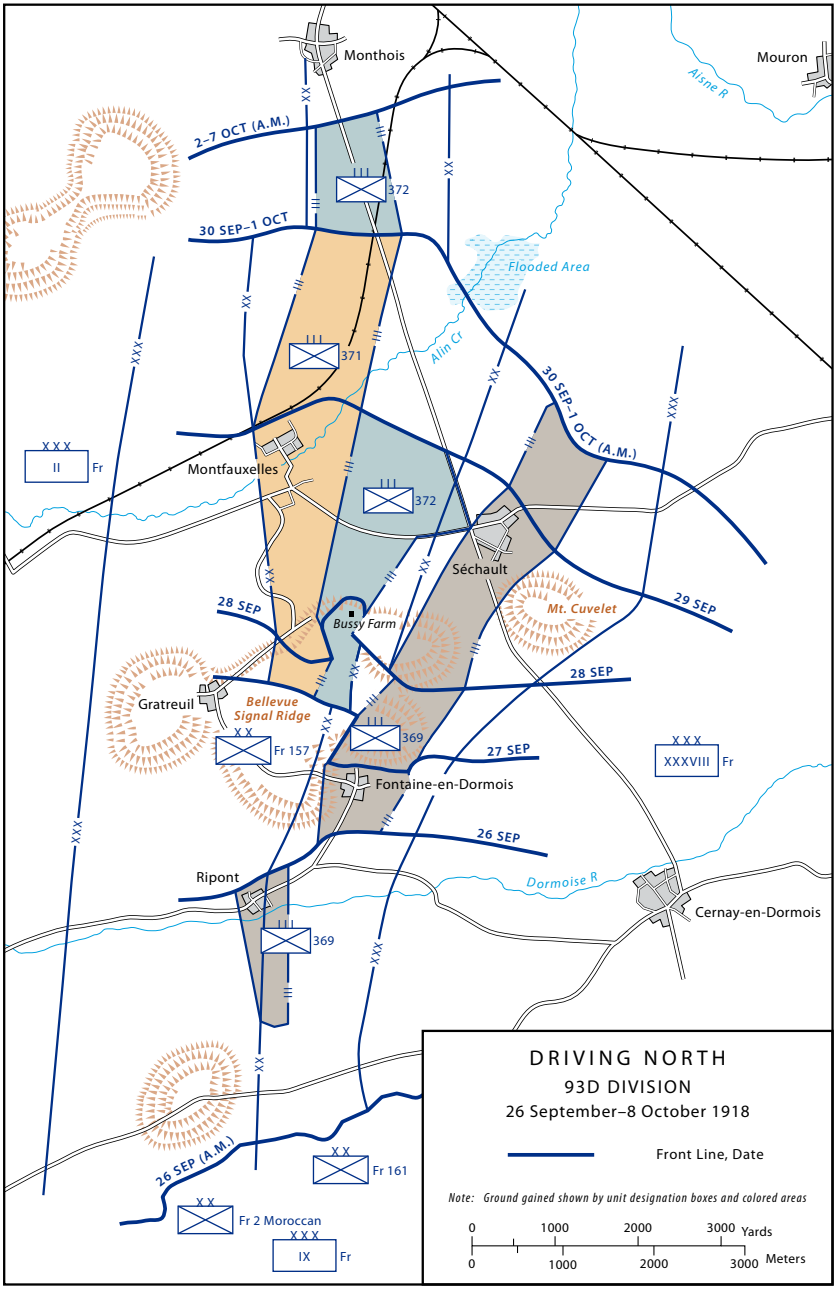
At dusk on 25 September, the men of the 93d Division marched to their staging areas behind the French trenches two kilometers south of the village of Ripont. At 2300, the French artillery began a six-and-a-half-hour barrage. One observer remarked, "The thunder and roar of the massed artillery shook the earth and the sky was alight with the flashes of guns. It was wondrous—it was insanity and the fever of it gripped us all." As with the American First Army to the east, the men of the French Fourth Army began their advance on the morning of 26 September. All three American regiments were in reserve, waiting to support a breakthrough or relieve exhausted units. The battle plan for the IX Corps was simple, to attack northward with two divisions abreast—the 2d Moroccan Division on the left and the French 161st on the right. The French 157th Division was in reserve and would move forward to fill any gaps in the advance. In so doing, the division had to overcome tough German defenders and challenging terrain. Directly in its path of advance was the Dormoise River, flowing from east to west, followed by a heavily forested ridgeline known as Bellevue Signal Ridge extending over two kilometers across the route of advance. Numerous villages in the sector had also been fortified by the Germans and presented further obstacles.

The French 161st Division—attacking on a kilometer-wide front—soon found the German frontline trenches abandoned and pushed forward to the second German line, where it finally met resistance. During the advance, a gap opened between the two French divisions. The 369th Infantry pushed forward on its own initiative and filled the gap, placing its three battalions in column

with the 3d Battalion leading the attack. With the French on their right and the Moroccans on the left, the Americans pushed across the Dormoise River and began moving on Ripont. Despite the artillery bombardment, German resistance was heavy and the low-lying ground on either side of the Dormoise was marshy and exposed to German machine gun fire. Nevertheless, the attack pressed forward, and the 369th captured Ripont by nightfall.

On the night of 26–27 September, the 369th Infantry was ordered to shift over 500 meters to the east and prepare to attack the village of Fontaine-en-Dormois the next day. Delays in the transmission and translation of their orders meant that the Americans were not in line in time to advance with the rest of the division. Instead, they again moved up after a gap opened between the 161st Division's two attacking regiments. Once in line, the 369th made slow progress on 28 September as it cleared German troops from the eastern half of the Bellevue Signal Ridge. During the hard fighting on the ridgeline, dense morning fog and poison gas attacks complicated the advance. German defenses were well camouflaged, enabling enemy machine guns to catch American units in the open. Finally, on the morning of 29 September, the 369th broke out into open ground and advanced nearly 2,500 meters, capturing the village of Séchault to the northeast. It remained in line another day before withdrawing on 30 September and shifting into division reserve, where it would stay until finally being relieved on 7 October. Between 26 September and 1 October, the 369th advanced nearly eight kilometers, and suffered 122 soldiers killed and another 663 wounded (*Map 12*).

While the French 161st Division—including the 369th Infantry—began to shift its attack to the northeast on 27 September, the French 157th Division was inserted into the line, occupying the corps front across the center of Bellevue Signal Ridge. The 371st Infantry took over 700 meters of the division's kilometer-wide front by the morning of 28 October and began to advance with its battalions in column. Problems with liaison soon resulted in another gap opening in the line, this time between the 371st on the left and the 161st Division on the right. The 157th Division ordered the 372d Infantry to move two of its battalions forward to fill the gap and continue the advance. The regiment's 1st and 3d Battalions attacked while the 2d Battalion remained in support. Fighting across the ridge proved exceedingly difficult, as the German defenses included concrete pillboxes and dense barbed wire entanglements. Even with French artillery support,


Monthois
Mouron
Aisne R
2–7 OCT (A.M.)
372
30 SEP–1 OCT
Flooded Area
Alin Cr
371
30 SEP–7 OCT (A.M.)
XXX
II
Fr
Montfauxelles
372
Séchault
28 SEP
Bussy Farm
Mt. Cuvelet
29 SEP
28 SEP
Gratreuil
Bellevue
Signal Ridge
XX
Fr 157
369
27 SEP
XXX
XXXVIII
Fr
Fontaine-en-Dormois
26 SEP
Ripont
Dormoise R
Cernay-en-Dormois
369
DRIVING NORTH
93D DIVISION
26 September–8 October 1918
Front Line, Date
Note: Ground gained shown by unit designation boxes and colored areas
0 1000 2000 3000 Yards
0 1000 2000 3000 Meters
26 SEP (A.M.)
XX
Fr 161
XX
Fr 2 Moroccan
XXX
IX
Fr

Map 12

the advance was sluggish. Casualties among junior officers led many sergeants and corporals to take charge of the attack. In one case, Cpl. Freddie Stowers, a squad leader in Company C, 371st Infantry, led his platoon forward to knock out a machine gun nest. Despite being severely wounded, he managed to occupy the German positions before collapsing and later dying from his wounds. Corporal Stowers received the Medal of Honor for his heroism. In a monumental but costly effort, the Americans soon crossed the ridgeline and entered open fields, taking Bussy Farm during the night of 28 September.

For all three American regiments, the confusing terrain and the evolving situation on the battlefield proved challenging. Relieving French units and shifting positions was a simple process when fighting from fixed trenches. However, conducting attacks across difficult and changing terrain required units to communicate through runners, leading one American officer to remark that "liaison is more important than ammunition" in a battle. German artillery also forced the soldiers to disperse and seek cover when under fire, complicating offensive operations while inflicting more casualties. In addition, after two days of fighting the men had consumed their prepared rations, meaning that except for the occasional delivery of hard French bread brought forward in rucksacks, many soldiers went more than a day between meals.

On 29 September, the two regiments continued to drive north—the 371st on the left and the 372d on the right—crossing open ground and passing through a cluster of small villages along a rail line. Methodically advancing through the exposed terrain, the two regiments cleared German machine gun positions and snipers from destroyed houses, trenches, and abandoned artillery emplacements. As the advance continued, artillery support became scarce, and soldiers had to rely on their rifles and hand grenades. After reaching a line running east-west from Séchault to Montfauxelles, the 372d withdrew to reorganize around Bussy Farm. The 371st, meanwhile, continued its attack and advanced another two kilometers before halting on the night of 30 September. The 2d Battalion, 372d Infantry, relieved the exhausted men of the 371st, enabling the regiment to move into divisional reserve. The 371st Infantry had suffered 107 killed and 769 wounded in the fighting from 26 September through 1 October, while the 372d Infantry lost 62 killed and 337 wounded during the same time span.

The French IX Corps continued to attack between 2 and 7 October, but as it approached the main German defensive line south

of the Aisne River, the French Fourth Army's offensive began to lose momentum. On the right, the French XXXVIII Corps was held up near Binarville. On the left, the French II Corps could not overcome the German defenses along Blanc Mont Ridge. With the American First Army struggling to advance in the Meuse-Argonne, the entire Franco-American offensive appeared on the verge of exhaustion. On the night of 6–7 October, the French 125th Division relieved the 157th Division. All three American regiments soon moved south for rest and rehabilitation. In their three weeks of fighting, the American regiments suffered 2,502 casualties, including 418 soldiers killed.

French assessments of the American contributions to the IX Corps attack were positive. In a postbattle message to his troops, General Mariano Goybet stated:

> I am proud to forward you here with the thanks and congratulations of General Garnier-Duplessix and I want at the same time, dear friends of all ranks, Americans and French, to tell you as your leader and as a soldier, from the bottom of my heart how grateful I am to you all for the glory you have acquired for our splendid 157th Division.

In mid-October, having served ably during their time at the front, all three regiments moved to a quiet sector near the Vosges Mountains where they remained until the Armistice.

Blanc Mont Ridge (2–27 October 1918)

With its stalled advance threatening to hold up the American First Army's offensive in the Meuse-Argonne, the French Fourth Army looked for a way to crack the German lines. The main obstacle was a heavily fortified enemy position running along Blanc Mont Ridge, four kilometers north of Sommepy. The Fourth Army commander, General Gouraud, knew that the position was "essential to the Germans if they wished to maintain their line in Champagne." If the French could seize and hold the ridge, the Germans would have to make a fighting withdrawal to the Aisne River, thirty kilometers to the north. However, considering the position's perceived strength, Gouraud did not believe that his worn-out forces were up to the challenge. Luckily for the Frenchman, Foch had requested that Pershing send American reinforcements to help the Fourth Army's attack. Although "loathe to spare any troops," Pershing recognized the seriousness of the situation and begrudgingly agreed to send

two American divisions—the veteran 2d and the inexperienced 36th—to the French.

During the night of 28–29 September, the 2d Division—under Marine Corps Maj. Gen. John A. Lejeune—began moving to the Fourth Army's front. As a part of the French XXI Corps under General Stanislas Naulin, the division began deploying along a three-kilometer section of the line on the night of 30 September–1 October, relieving the French 61st division and a battalion of the French 21st Division, which remained in line on the Americans' left. Lejeune's staff developed a complicated plan for the impending attack. With Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Wendell C. Neville's 4th Brigade (U.S. Marines) in line, Lejeune shifted Brig. Gen. Hanson E. Ely's 3d Infantry Brigade, serving in reserve, to the east to take over part of the front. After an earlier French action had resulted in a sharp bend in the line, Lejeune planned to attack with both brigades along a divided front. The 4th Brigade would make a frontal attack on Blanc Mont Ridge while the 3d Brigade made a converging attack two kilometers to the east, coming into line with the 4th Brigade on reaching their objective. The 2d Field Artillery Brigade, meanwhile, would fire a five-minute heavy barrage on the German lines just before the attack, then shift to a rolling barrage for both the marine and infantry advances. Considering the strength of the German defenses, the French provided the Americans two aero squadrons, a balloon company, and the majority of the XXI Corps' artillery units. They also sent a French tank battalion to each attacking brigade.

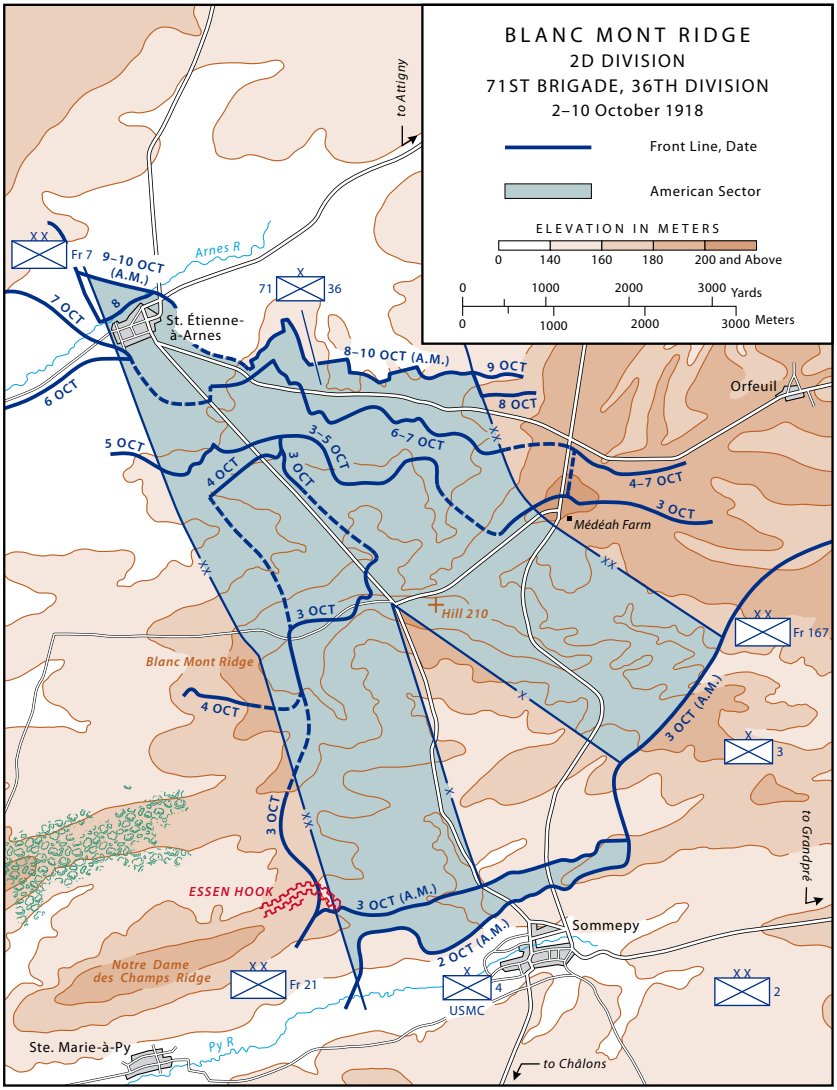
The 2d Division formally took control of the line on 2 October. Lejeune requested and received Naulin's approval to delay the attack twenty-four hours to allow the artillery to get into position and to enable the attacking infantry to become familiar with the terrain. Despite some confusion between the French and the soldiers from the 3d Brigade as the latter moved into their attack positions, both brigades stepped off as scheduled at 0550 on 3 October. The 4th Brigade attacked with the 6th Regiment (U.S. Marines) in front and the 5th Regiment (U.S. Marines) in support, while the 3d Brigade led with the 9th Infantry and the 23d Infantry in support. Each regiment arranged their three battalions in column so as to prevent congestion in the zone of attack. Lejeune had also ordered his unit commanders to send 20 percent of their officers and men to the division staff to guard equipment, serve as litter bearers, corral stragglers and prisoners, and bury the dead. Experience had shown

the 2d Division commander that flooding an attack zone with an excess of men did not provide an advantage, but rather resulted in unnecessary casualties. Instead, the 2d Division would conduct a set-piece attack based on the close coordination of artillery and infantry. The gunners and infantrymen were to keep in close contact throughout the advance, and the soldiers and marines were not to attack without artillery support.

The plan for 3 October worked exceedingly well. Each brigade arrived at the objective—the Medéah Farm–Blanc Mont road—by 0840 and linked their lines together. German reports stated that the artillery preparation had disrupted their communications, destroyed half their machine guns, and inflicted as many as 25 percent casualties among defending units. The advances also created a triangle of Germans within the zone of attack that the American support units subsequently cleared out. The 3d Brigade essentially annihilated the German *410th Infantry Regiment*, which reported suffering over 800 casualties. After reaching their objective line, the marines and soldiers began digging in and consolidating their positions (*Map 13*).

Upon learning of the attack's success, Gouraud described it as "brilliant" and recommended that the 2d Division be cited in special orders. Pétain agreed, proclaiming the operation "the single greatest achievement of the 1918 campaign." Naulin was so impressed that he ordered French cavalry into the sector in order to break through the line should the opportunity arise. It never did, but the French soon called for the Americans to press forward. Lejeune resisted, explaining that while the French 167th Division had moved forward to protect the American right flank, the French 21st Division had failed to do so on the left. In order to protect his flank, Neville had directed elements from the 5th Regiment to turn west and suppress the German position known as Essen Hook. With its left flank open, the 4th Brigade was unable to advance. However, on the American right, General Ely moved the 23d Infantry up through the 9th Infantry's lines and made another coordinated attack at 1630. The American infantrymen pressed forward another three kilometers, driving a deep salient into the German line.

That night, General Naulin again ordered the advance to continue the next day and again Lejeune objected. His men were near the limit of their artillery support and he needed time to move his guns forward. Naulin insisted, however, and Lejeune ordered the attack to commence the next morning. Predictably, the 3d Brigade met strong resistance and had to return to its starting



Map 13

positions after taking heavy casualties. On the division's left, the 4th Brigade was able to press forward and come in line with the 3d Brigade just south of the St. Étienne–Orfeuil road. The division remained in this position on 5 October as the French pushed forward on both flanks.

The morning of 6 October brought the 2d Division some relief with the arrival of the 36th Division's 71st Infantry Brigade, which immediately was attached to the 2d Division and ordered into the line on 7 October. A National Guard unit of men from Texas and Oklahoma, the 36th Division had arrived in France in July and had yet to see combat. It also lacked its artillery brigade, which was still undergoing training. Despite their inexperience, the green soldiers were ordered to attack on 8 October. The brigade commander, Brig. Gen. Pegram Whitworth, placed the 141st Infantry on the right and the 142d Infantry on the left, with each regiment putting their battalions in column. The 1st Battalion, 6th Regiment, was ordered to protect the 71st Brigade's left flank, while the 2d Battalion, 9th Infantry, covered the right.

With the artillery having moved forward over the previous days, the infantry began advancing at 0515 on 8 October behind a rolling barrage. They soon came under heavy machine gun fire and halted just north of the St. Étienne–Orfeuil road. Not surprisingly, the untried units suffered greatly in the advance, losing half of their battalion commanders. Although untested, the men from the 36th were no less brave than their more seasoned counterparts in the 2d Division. In one instance, Cpl. Harold L. Turner from Company F, 2d Battalion, 142d Infantry, helped lead an attack against heavy machine gun fire. With his platoon reduced to only four men, Turner rushed forward with fixed bayonet during a lull in the German fire, capturing the position that included fifty Germans and four machine guns. For his actions, he later received the Medal of Honor.

As the 71st Brigade advanced, the 1st Battalion, 6th Regiment, moved up on the left and seized the town of St. Étienne-à-Arnes, establishing a defensive line on its northern edge. Patrols in the town soon discovered several underground bunkers, one of which had bunks for 200 men, office spaces, and electric lights. After beating back a German counterattack that afternoon, the marines and soldiers dug in across the line. They remained there the next day, strengthening their positions and awaiting relief.

On the night of 9–10 October, the rest of Maj. Gen. William R. Smith's 36th Division arrived and took control of the sector, relieving the 2d Division. The soldiers and marines had done well, advancing as many as eight kilometers between 2 and 10 October and smashing through the German defenses south of the Aisne. These gains came at a steep price, however, as the division

German machine gun emplacement captured by the 2d Division
(National Archives)

suffered 895 deaths and 3,895 men wounded. Even so, Lejeune's men had done all that had been asked and more, reigniting the Fourth Army's offensive. Fires burning in the distance indicated that the Germans were preparing for a general withdrawal to the north, but it would fall to the 36th Division to give chase while the weary men from the 2d Division withdrew south to rest and resume training.

With the 72d Infantry Brigade, under Brig. Gen. John A. Hulen, having relieved the rest of 2d Division, General Smith prepared to push forward with the 71st Brigade on 10 October as part of a general advance by the XXI Corps. Because the 36th Division lacked its artillery brigade, Lejeune agreed to attach Brig. Gen. Albert J. Bowley's 2d Field Artillery Brigade and the 2d Engineers to Smith's division. The French also provided an aero squadron and a regiment of 155-mm. guns to support the Americans.

The 71st Brigade stepped off at 1630, with the 72d Brigade in support. They advanced roughly six kilometers, staying in close contact with the retreating Germans, and seized the village of Machault. The next morning, Hulen's 72d Brigade renewed the attack at 0930. With the Germans rapidly withdrawing, the advance covered as much as fifteen kilometers, capturing the town of Vaux-Champagne by nightfall. The next day, they continued to advance

without opposition, reaching the Canal des Ardennes just south of the Aisne River on 13 October.

On reaching the canal, the 36th Division set about building defensive lines between the villages of Attigny and Givry, linking with the French 73d Division to the east and the French 7th Division to the west. Over the next two weeks, the units shifted their boundaries left and right as the French XI Corps—which relieved the XXI Corps on 18 October—adjusted its front. On 23 October, the 36th Division pushed its eastern boundary out past the small hamlet of Roche. Once there, they were directed to make an attack against a German position south of the Aisne at Forest Farm.

Following a twenty-minute artillery barrage, the 71st Brigade started the attack on Forest Farm at 1630 on 27 October, again placing its regiments abreast with battalions arranged in column. During their preparations, the Americans discovered that an abandoned network of German telephone wires covered the entire countryside, presenting the 142d Infantry's commander, Col. Alfred W. Bloor, with an opportunity to make use of his soldiers' unique makeup. Among his Oklahomans were members of the Native American Choctaw tribe, whom Bloor stationed at key points of the telephone network. Suspecting that the Germans were listening in on American communications, Bloor had the Choctaws transmit American communications in their native language, ensuring that the Germans would not be able to decipher the messages.

The 71st Brigade succeeded in seizing its objectives on 27 October with little difficulty. That night, the French 22d Division relieved the entire division, and the soldiers of the 36th began moving toward Triaucourt—30 kilometers southwest of Verdun—where they would pass into the reserve of the American First Army. The 2d Field Artillery Brigade and the 2d Engineers both returned to their division, joining it for the ongoing Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Although the 36th Division would not see action again before the Armistice, it gained valuable combat experience during its time in the line. During the month of October, the division advanced twenty-five kilometers. These gains came at the cost of 598 men killed and 2,002 men wounded. In total, the 2d Division and the 36th Division suffered 7,390 casualties in the seizure of Blanc Mont Ridge and the pursuit to the Aisne, but in so doing they helped to reinvigorate the French Fourth Army and resume the Franco-American drive toward Mézières.

The Selle (5–20 October 1918)

While the 2d Division pushed beyond Blanc Mont Ridge, the American 27th and 30th Divisions returned to the British lines on the night of 5–6 October, relieving the battered Australian Corps along the Selle River. Much like the Australians, the Americans were physically exhausted and badly in need of replacements. The II Corps' quartermaster, for example, struggled to outfit the divisions with new American uniforms, because the AEF's logistics apparatus concentrated overwhelmingly on supplying the American First Army. The BEF stepped in to make up this deficiency by providing many soldiers in the II Corps with British uniforms—although with distinctive American buttons that did not display the British coat of arms. To address his command's persistent manpower shortage, General Read recalled all officers from the 27th and 30th Divisions who were attending training schools. However, even this step did not make up for the losses the divisions had suffered in their attacks on the Hindenburg Line.

After relieving the Australian 5th Division, the 30th Division occupied the front line while the 27th remained in reserve. Before the relief, the Australians had endured a period of intense fighting in the sector, and as a result the 30th Division took over an irregular front defined by a sharp German-held salient northwest of the town of Montbrehain. To prepare for the next stage of the British Fourth Army's advance, scheduled to begin on 8 October, the 30th Division carried out a limited attack against the salient, moving forward at dawn on 7 October behind a creeping barrage. Despite heavy casualties, by the end of the day the division secured a straight front line that connected with the adjoining British 6th Division. General Lewis then received orders from the British Fourth Army to launch an attack the next morning to take the villages of Brancourt-le-Grand and Prémont.

The Fourth Army's advance on 8 October began with a brief but intense artillery barrage that dropped some 350,000 shells on the German lines. The Germans described this type of barrage as "drumfire" (*Trommelfeuer*), comparing the rapid and incessant detonation of high explosive shells to the sound of a drumroll. Earlier in the war, preparatory bombardments routinely had lasted for days. By the fall of 1918, however, bombardments were often brief but violent affairs aimed at shocking and suppressing enemy forces, rather than completely destroying them. The use of drumfire helped facilitate the rapid movement of infantry across

Americans in a British tank following an Australian soldier on horseback (National Archives)

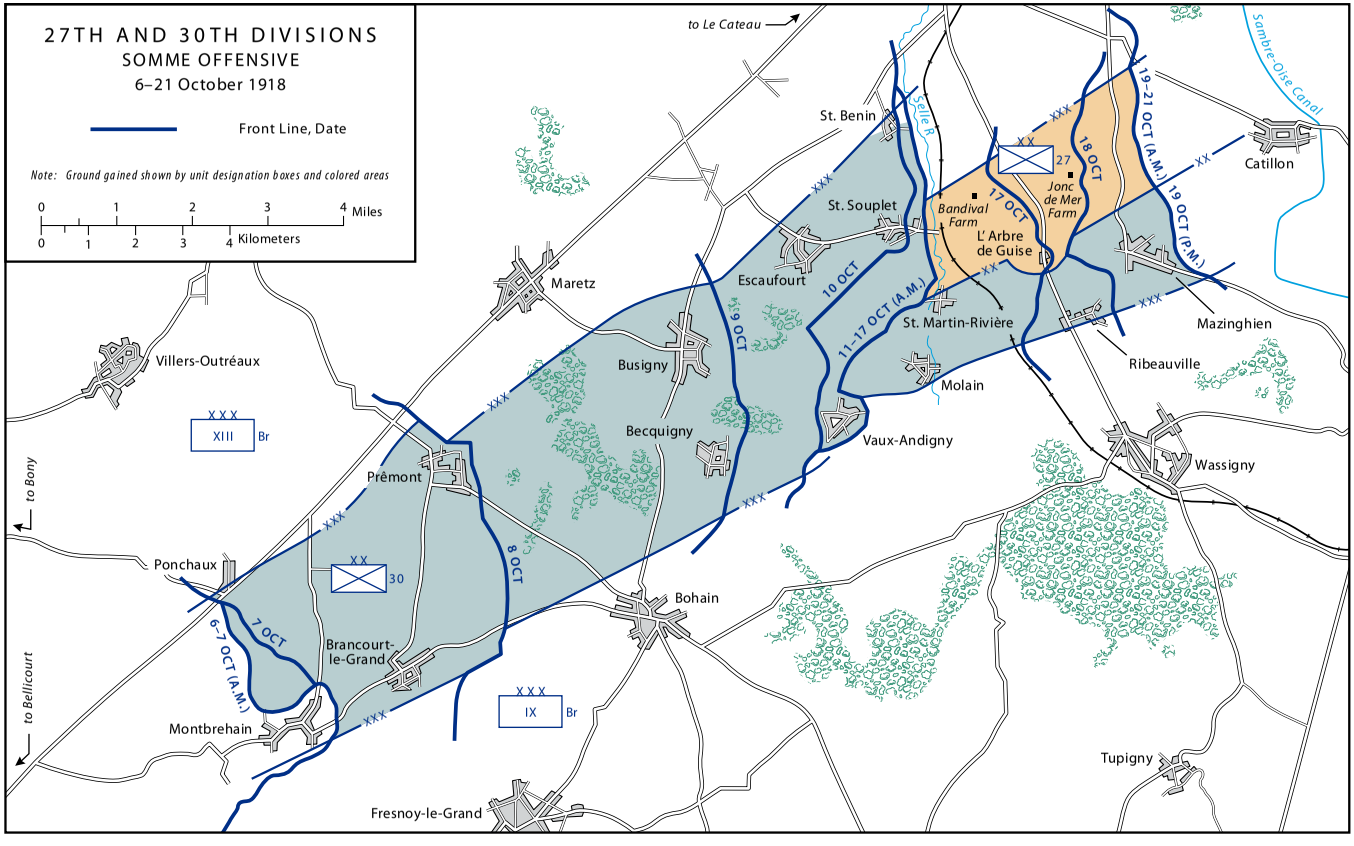
still-intact ground while preserving the element of surprise. At zero hour, the 118th Infantry set off, accompanied by a battalion of British heavy tanks and two companies of Whippet tanks. The infantry-tank advance gave the Germans no time to recover from the bombardment, and by the early afternoon the 30th Division had secured all of its objectives for the day.

The 30th Division's orders for the next day envisioned an advance of almost 6,500 meters to the high ground overlooking the Selle at Molain and St. Souplet. The 59th Brigade led the attack with both of its regiments in line, advancing in broad daylight at 1030. Although the speed of the American advance relative to that of the neighboring British 6th Division meant that the 30th Division's right flank was exposed, the operation was successful. Between 1200 and 1630, the 60th Brigade leapfrogged the 59th's lines, pushing through and occupying the towns of Busigny and Becquigny. The attack continued unabated during the following two days, and by 11 October the Allied lines had reached the Selle. Elements of the 30th Division captured the villages of St. Souplet, St. Benin, and Escaufourt, liberating approximately 700 French civilians in the process. Only the division's failure to secure a bridgehead over the Selle in the face of strong German resistance tempered this achievement.

After consolidating its gains, the 30th Division withdrew from the line on 12 October, yielding its sector to the 27th Division. The front line along the Selle remained quiet, and the 27th confined itself to active patrolling and exchanging sniper and artillery fire with the Germans holding the eastern approaches to St. Souplet. However, the static front along the Selle did not suit the 27th Division's commander, Maj. Gen. John F. O'Ryan, who scheduled a major trench raid, intended to capture prisoners and gain intelligence about the enemy forces in the area. O'Ryan turned the details for the raid over to the commander of the 54th Infantry Brigade, Brig. Gen. Palmer E. Pierce, who selected the 108th Infantry for the task. Using an artillery barrage of high explosive and smoke shells on the German positions opposite St. Souplet as cover, a raiding party of twenty-one chosen men—led by 1st Lt. Charles R. Fritz of Company I, 3d Battalion, 108th Infantry—forded the Selle at 1600 on 14 October and slipped into the German lines during a lull in the bombardment. The raiders entered a dugout and captured twenty-three men belonging to the German *414th Regiment*, *204th Division*, herding them back across the river when the bombardment resumed. The daylight raid caught the Germans completely by surprise, and only two Americans were slightly wounded. They quickly passed the intelligence gained from the prisoners, along with captured maps and documents, to the II Corps and to the Fourth Army's headquarters (*Map 14*).

The II Corps made good use of information garnered in this operation. On the same day of the raid, General Read received orders from the Fourth Army to prepare for an attack across the river as part of a general advance scheduled for 17 October, in tandem with an advance by the French First Army to the south. The Fourth Army's plans called for the 30th Division to take over a portion of the line held by the 27th Division on the night of 15–16 October. The American divisions would then advance in line over the Selle, with the 27th Division on the left and the 30th on the right. Twenty tanks belonging to the Tank Corps' 301st Battalion would support the American attack. The 27th Division's orders were to cross a railway embankment running parallel to the Selle and to secure Bandival Farm, the hamlet of L'Arbre de Guise, and the ridgeline of Jonc de Mer Farm. The division would then consolidate a line almost five kilometers from the jumping-off point on the Selle. The 30th Division's task—attacking with its brigades in column—was to take the German trenches in front of the towns of Molain and St. Martin-Rivière, before occupying

Map 14


27TH AND 30TH DIVISIONS
SOMME OFFENSIVE
6–21 October 1918
Front Line, Date
Note: Ground gained shown by unit designation boxes and colored areas
0 1 2 3 4 Miles
0 1 2 3 4 Kilometers
to Le Cateau
St. Benin
Selle R.
Sambre-Oise Canal
Catillon
St. Souplet
Bandival Farm
Jonc de Mer Farm
L' Arbre de Guise
17 OCT
18 OCT
19-21 OCT (A.M.)
19 OCT (P.M.)
Maretz
Escaufourt
10 OCT
9 OCT
11-17 OCT (A.M.)
St. Martin-Rivière
Mazinghien
Ribeauville
Molain
Busigny
Becquigny
Vaux-Andigny
Wassigny
Villers-Outréaux
XIII Br
Prêmont
to Bony
Ponchaux
30
8 OCT
7 OCT
6-7 OCT (A.M.)
Bohain
Brancourt-le-Grand
IX Br
Montbrehain
to Bellicourt
Fresnoy-le-Grand
Tupigny

a line near the village of Ribeauville. Once the 30th Division had seized this objective, the 60th Brigade was to pass through the 59th Brigade and advance toward the Sambre-Oise Canal.

Air support for the operation would be provided by Nos. 3 and 35 Squadrons of the Australian Flying Corps. These units would not only track the progress of Allied infantry but also provide warning of German counterattacks by using signal flares. Like the RAF in the Hamel and St. Quentin operations, the Australian planes would help mask the noise of the assembling tanks and drop phosphorus bombs to create a smoke screen for the advancing infantry.

Unfortunately, the 27th Division's attack began poorly. On the right, the 105th Infantry (followed by the 106th Infantry, in support) began its advance at 0520 according to plan, but a German counterbarrage hit both regiments almost immediately, inflicting heavy casualties—including three of the 105th Infantry's company officers. Dense fog hampered visibility, and command and control suffered accordingly, with battalions becoming intermixed throughout the morning. Although the attackers secured a crossing over the Selle and reached the railroad embankment beyond, they were unable to keep pace with the supporting artillery barrage. After three hours, the 105th Infantry occupied L'Arbre de Guise, but could not advance further. The regiment's 1st and 2d Battalions nevertheless held the village against German counterattacks throughout the day.

On the left, the 1st Battalion, 108th Infantry—with the 3d Battalion in support—reached the railroad embankment across the Selle after destroying several German machine gun positions situated between the river and the embankment. The battalion advanced almost to Bandival Farm before halting in the face of heavy German fire. The tanks of the 301st Battalion offered only limited assistance, as many could not complete the river crossing, and the few that did were quickly disabled. Around midnight on 17 October, the 27th Division ordered its forward elements to occupy a ridge some 1,300 meters to the east of Bandival Farm. The division occupied this position for the remainder of the battle, sending out patrols and offering limited support to the 30th Division on the right.

The 30th Division's attack also went forward at 0520 on 17 October, with the 59th Brigade in the lead and the 60th Brigade following behind in support. As in the 27th Division's sector, the thick morning fog hampered progress and the lead battalions in both the 117th and 118th Infantry struggled to reach the Selle.

Once across the river, the 59th Brigade's intermixed battalions crossed the railroad embankment and reached the road running toward L'Arbre de Guise to the northeast where they dug in. After dark, the 60th Brigade advanced and assumed control of the 59th Brigade's sector. The 30th Division's advance resumed the next morning, but heavy German fire forced both the 1st Battalion, 119th Infantry, and the 1st Battalion, 120th Infantry, to withdraw back to the jumping-off point after moving forward a few hundred meters. After discovering that the Germans had withdrawn that evening, the 119th Infantry pushed forward almost two kilometers, occupying the village of Ribeauville—one of the primary objectives for the first day. On the morning of 19 October, the 119th Infantry resumed its advance at 0515, reaching Mazinghien and occupying a position just east of the village. The 120th Infantry on the left advanced to the line established by the 119th Infantry, and dug in. By this time, both American divisions were worn out and understrength after weeks of nearly continuous fighting.

On the night of 19–20 October, the equally exhausted and depleted British 6th Division relieved the 27th Division, while the British 1st Division took over the sector held by the 30th Division. After rotating out of the front line, the units returned to training areas behind the Fourth Army's sector, where they resupplied and reorganized. They continued training for an anticipated return to combat, but thankfully neither division would return to active operations before the Armistice. Having received few replacements, the two divisions had become progressively smaller in the course of their time with the British, making further combat operations particularly challenging. The 27th Division suffered a total of 1,829 deaths, 6,505 wounded, and 229 captured during its period of service with the British, while the 30th Division lost 1,641 killed, 6,774 wounded, and 75 captured.

Bridging the Scheldt (30 October–11 November 1918)

The day after the British Fourth Army began its attack on the Hindenburg Line, the Allied Army Group Flanders (GAF) under King Albert I of Belgium launched its own contribution to Foch's Grand Allied Offensive. Advancing broadly from the Belgian coast to the Lys River, Albert's main objective was his country's liberation. Since the start of the war, he had understood that his small army was irreplaceable and could not sustain the losses of the other great powers. Although he declined participation in the

BEF's 1917 Ypres Offensive, the Belgian king stood his ground against the German *Georgette Offensive* in April 1918. By the end of the summer, he and his compatriots sensed that their long-awaited moment was at hand.

The attack began on 28 September in a downpour over the same swampy, lunar terrain that had impeded British operations the year before. Although the sector had relatively weak German opposition, the waterlogged ground made infantry movement difficult and rendered tanks nearly useless. Despite these challenges, the objective of Passchendaele Ridge fell to the Allies on the first day, with the Belgian Army capturing the village of Passchendaele itself. Although heartened by these victories, the GAF—which had limited experience with offensive operations—began to outrun its supply lines. In the first major operation of its kind, the RAF airdropped some thirteen tons of food to Allied frontline troops on 2 October. Even with this innovative means of supply, progress bogged down as German resistance stiffened with the arrival of six additional divisions.

On 14 October, concerned about the GAF's slowing progress—and hoping to counterbalance the newly arrived German reinforcements—Foch requested that Pershing contribute two AEF divisions to the Allied offensive in Flanders. Pershing selected two divisions for redeployment, Maj. Gen. Charles S. Farnsworth's 37th (Buckeye) Division, composed of Ohio National Guard units, and Maj. Gen. William H. Johnston's 91st (Wild West) Division, made up of men drawn largely from the Pacific Northwest. Both divisions had participated in the opening phase of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive as part of the American V Army Corps, although this was the extent of their combat experience. Neither division had its organic artillery brigade, so they both relied on French units—accompanied, in the case of the 91st Division on 10–11 November, by Belgian units—for artillery support.

The two American divisions entered the line in Flanders on 30 October, with the 91st taking over a section in front of the town of Waregem and the 37th occupying a position in front of Olsene, near the Lys River. The French 128th Division held the sector between them. The 37th Division was initially attached to the French XXX Corps, commanded by General Hyppolyte-Alphonse Pénet, while the 91st Division operated as part of General André J. E. Massenet's French VII Corps. The American divisions were directed to assist Allied efforts to push the Germans beyond the Scheldt. Unlike the scarred morass that the GAF had traversed over the

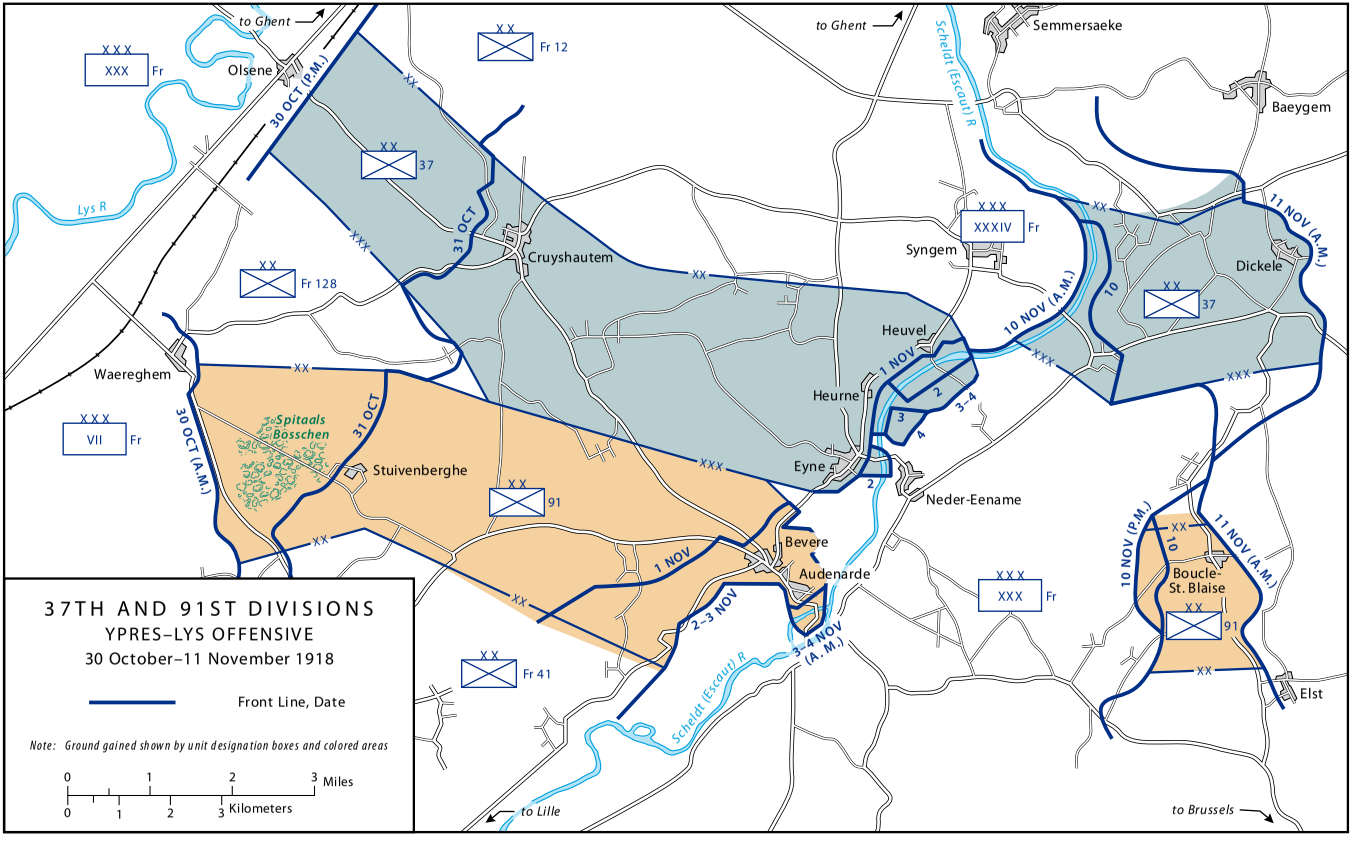
Bridging a canal in Audenarde, Belgium (National Archives)

previous month, this region of Flanders was relatively untouched by the war, and most of the civilian population remained in the area.

At 0530 on 31 October, the three divisions left their positions and advanced toward the Germans. The French 128th Division's slow rate of advance in the center hampered the attack, and both American divisions came to a halt after moving forward some four kilometers—the 37th Division near the village of Cruyshautem, and the 91st Division near Stuivenberg. Intense German machine gun fire, particularly on the open flanks where the French had not advanced—along with concentrated artillery—took a heavy toll. The 91st Division encountered severe difficulties after moving through the Spitaals Bosschen Wood when its exposed left flank took enfilading fire (*Map 15*).

The Germans were falling back toward the Scheldt when the Allied attack resumed the next morning. By 1 November, the American divisions reached their primary objectives, occupying a line along the Scheldt with the 37th Division astride the villages Heurne and Eine and the 91st Division dug in near Bevere. At dawn on 2 November, Companies K and M of the 37th Division's

Map 15


37TH AND 91ST DIVISIONS
YPRES–LYS OFFENSIVE
30 October–11 November 1918
Front Line, Date
Note: Ground gained shown by unit designation boxes and colored areas
0 1 2 3 Miles
0 1 2 3 Kilometers
to Ghent
Olsene
XXX
Fr
30 OCT (P.M.)
Lys R
Fr 12
37
31 OCT
Cruyshautem
Fr 128
Waereghem
30 OCT (A.M.)
Spitaals Bosschen
31 OCT
Stuivenberghe
VII
91
1 NOV
2–3 NOV
3–4 NOV (A.M.)
Fr 41
Scheldt (Escaut) R
to Lille
to Ghent
Semmersaeke
Baeygem
Schelde (Escaut) R
XXXIV
Syngem
Dickele
11 NOV (A.M.)
10 NOV (A.M.)
Heuvel
Heurne
Eyne
Neder-Eename
Bevere
Audenarde
10 NOV (P.M.)
Boucle St. Blaise
Elst
to Brussels

148th Infantry braved intense German artillery to build a temporary bridge over the Scheldt at Heurne using felled trees and debris from houses. That afternoon the rest of the 3d Battalion, 148th Infantry, used the makeshift bridge to cross the river. The same day, Companies E and H of the 148th, along with the 112th Engineers, attempted to bridge the Scheldt between Heurne and Heuvel, but the enemy fire proved too intense. That night, under cover of darkness, the 112th managed to complete three footbridges across the river, one at Heuvel, and two more at Eine.

To the south, the 91st Division encountered greater difficulties trying to cross the Scheldt. Approaching the river, the American infantrymen first had to capture the town of Audenarde (Oudenaarde), whose German defenders enjoyed strong support from machine gun and artillery positions across the river. Throughout the evening of 2–3 November, the 91st Division fought in the streets of Audenarde, while the 316th Engineers prepared to span the river under the cover of darkness. On 4 November, mounting casualties forced the 91st to withdraw from the line, yielding its position to the French 41st Division.

After defending its bridgehead across the Scheldt at Heurne against German counterattacks, artillery, and aerial strafing, the 37th Division also withdrew from the line on 4 November. After a brief rest, the division joined the French XXXIV Corps five days later in an attempt to force a crossing over the Scheldt farther north. The division crossed the river near the village of Syngem on 10 November after soldiers of the 112th Engineers erected pontoon bridges under fire. On the morning of 11 November, the 37th Division advanced more than three kilometers before word of the Armistice reached the front lines. Meanwhile, the 91st Division remained with the French XXX Corps, making a largely unopposed advance in the direction of Boucle-St. Blaise. When the Armistice went into effect, the 37th Division had taken 1,648 casualties while serving as part of the GAF. The 91st suffered 1,033 casualties during the same period.

Italy: Vittorio-Veneto (24 October–4 November 1918)

As the Allies battered the Germans into submission on the Western Front in the fall of 1918, events in Italy also were approaching a climax. The Italian Front was a unique theater, with the front lines running along the northeastern Alpine frontier separating Italy and Austria-Hungary. The Dolomite range was

the site of devastating seesaw battles for icy peaks, mountain passes, and river bridgeheads. Artillery, supplies, and even animals frequently needed to be hauled over the vertical massifs with special rope lifts. Sentries on both sides often froze to death, and deadly avalanches, sometimes triggered by explosives, were common. The static nature of the front meant that by the time the United States entered the war in April 1917, the Italians and Austro-Hungarians had fought nine battles along the Isonzo River since May 1915.

In October 1917, the German *Fourteenth* and Austro-Hungarian *Fifth Armies* executed a spectacular breakthrough at Caporetto, smashing the Italian Second and Third Armies in the twelfth and final battle of the Isonzo. Using poison gas against obsolete Italian respirators, the Germans and Austro-Hungarians broke through the Italian lines and infiltrated the valleys below, inflicting 40,000 Italian casualties while capturing 265,000 troops and roughly 1,000 artillery pieces. As Italian morale collapsed, 400,000 soldiers deserted and the Italian Army fell back nearly 100 kilometers to the Piave River on the Asiago Plateau. Although the Italian theater was of secondary importance to the Allies, the looming collapse of Russia brought Italy's crisis to the forefront. Despite the need for troops on the Western Front, Britain sent six divisions and France sent five divisions to shore up the Italian front.

In January 1918, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker ordered the creation of the American Military Mission to Italy. He tapped Maj. Gen. Eben Swift, commander of a cavalry division during the 1916 Mexican Expedition and the first commander of the 82d Division, to lead the mission. Swift and three other officers spent the winter and spring months of 1918 assessing the Italian Army's morale, logistics, and military needs while also examining the general Italian attitude toward the Allies. The mission reported a great deal of information for Washington to contemplate.

In April, the Italians approached the American representative to the Allied Supreme War Council, General Tasker H. Bliss, to discuss the possibility of sending American troops to Italy. Although sympathetic to the Italian situation, Bliss expressed caution to the Wilson administration and General Pershing, noting that "demand would follow for more troops." He added, "the trouble in Italy is not so much the morale of the army as it is the morale of the country at large. The common people will soon complain that more Americans are not coming in order to relieve them from the burden of the war and the final morale effect may be bad instead of good."

The United States ultimately agreed to send one infantry regiment to Italy. Pershing chose the AEF's 332d Infantry from the 83d (Ohio) Division for the duty after the 83d had been reclassified as a "depot division" on reaching France. The task force included the 331st Field Hospital and a Provisional Motor Truck Train, bringing its total size to approximately 125 officers and 4,000 men. On 25 July, Brig. Gen. Charles G. Treat replaced Swift as the commander of all American forces in Italy after the latter reached statutory retirement. The new task force had a complex mission: bolster Italian morale, deceive the Central Powers into believing that a large American force was present in the theater, and assist the Italian Army in combat whenever possible. Under the command of Col. William A. Wallace, the 332d Infantry arrived in Italy on 29 July. The Americans also assigned Base Hospital No. 8 with thirty ambulance sections—including a driver named Ernest Hemingway—and fifty-four pilots of reconnaissance and bomber aircraft to the Italian campaign.

On the afternoon of 28 July, the soldiers of the 332d arrived in Milan to crowds shouting "Viva l'America, Viva l'Italia," as an Italian military band played *The Star-Spangled Banner*. The next morning, the 332d entrained for Lake Garda in the foothills of the Dolomites where it began a rigorous training program in mock trenches under the instruction of an elite Italian Arditti battalion. Created in 1917, the Arditti specifically trained as shock troops, breaching enemy defenses in preparation for the infantry. Each battalion in the 332d took three-day rotations in the trenches, as well as mountain warfare training. On 14 September, the realism of the training had tragic consequences during a final mock battle involving the regiment's 1st and 3d Battalions. As the Americans advanced under their machine gun and mortar fire, a British Stokes mortar round exploded prematurely, killing three enlisted men and one officer while wounding forty-seven soldiers. Although the incident accounted for more men lost than the 332d would suffer in combat, unit morale remained intact.

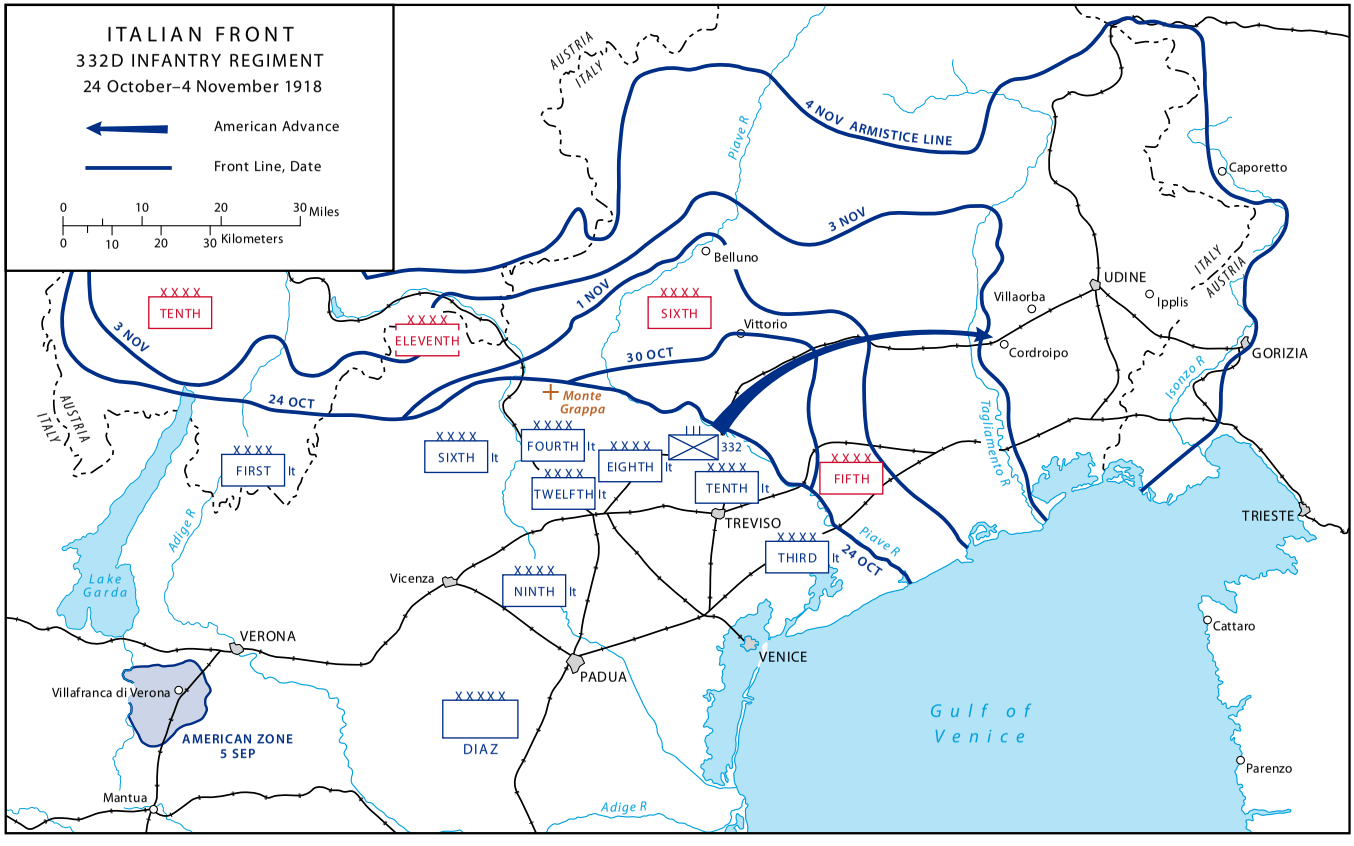
At the time of the accident, the 2d Battalion, 332d Infantry—commanded by Maj. Frank M. Scanland—was on its way to Treviso where the Allies' latest offensive was underway along the Piave River. In addition to the Italian Army at Treviso, the British had 50,000 men in three divisions and the French had 24,000 men in two divisions operating in the area. The 2d Battalion, considered to be undergoing its final training, held a quiet section of the Italian line along the Piave. On 4 October, Maj. Robert B. Burch's 1st Battalion

and Maj. Henry Vaughn's 3d Battalion arrived at Treviso. Once at the Piave front, Colonel Wallace was determined to maximize the role of the 332d as a "propaganda regiment" and set up a vigorous deception operation. Knowing that Austro-Hungarian airplanes regularly observed the area behind the front, Wallace decided to use the enemy's operations to Allied advantage. He staged daily outdoor training maneuvers and road marches by battalions, companies, and even platoons. Each day, the uniform varied from campaign hats to steel helmets, to overcoats, and even included newly acquired British leather battle jerkins. To maximize the visual effect, all regimental personnel turned out, even clerks and cooks. During one ten-day period in October, Wallace dispatched his companies and battalions on daily road marches of eight to sixteen kilometers out of Treviso and back by separate and varied routes. The deceptions worked, as Austrian intelligence estimated American strength in Italy at 100,000 troops.

Once at Treviso, the 332d was assigned to the Italian 31st Division under the British XIV Corps and the Italian Tenth Army. A new Allied offensive plan called for an advance across the Piave River by the Italian Eighth, Tenth, and Twelfth Armies, reinforced by British and French troops, with the objective of taking the city of Vittorio, a key Austrian logistics and communications hub in the Veneto region. If successful, the attack would drive a wedge between Austrian forces operating in the mountains to the north and those in the Adriatic plain to the south. A secondary attack by the Italian Fourth Army at Monte Grappa to the west would secure the left flank of the main attack (*Map 16*). The entire operation fell under the overall command of the Italian Army's chief of staff, General Armando Diaz.

Although the plan called for the 31st Division to force a crossing of the Piave, when the attack began on 24 October the division had been shifted to the reserve and the men of the 332d were mostly spectators to the initial fighting. The attacks were wildly successful, smashing the Austrians to such a degree that by 30 October "it was no longer possible to speak of organized [enemy] units." In truth, the offensive only hastened the ongoing collapse of the Austrian empire. Tens of thousands of Czech and Slovak soldiers had defected to the Italians over the preceding months, serving in independent units within the Italian Army. In mid-October, the Hungarians began dissolving their ties to the Austrian government. An independent Czechoslovak republic was declared on 28 October. The Slavs also moved to break with

Map 16


ITALIAN FRONT
332D INFANTRY REGIMENT
24 October–4 November 1918
American Advance
Front Line, Date
0 10 20 30 Miles
0 10 20 30 Kilometers
AUSTRIA
ITALY
4 NOV ARMISTICE LINE
Piave R
3 NOV
1 NOV
30 OCT
24 OCT
Belluno
Caporetto
UDINE
Villaorba
Ipplis
ITALY
AUSTRIA
Vittorio
Cordroipo
GORIZIA
Isonzo R
Tagliamento R
TENTH
ELEVENTH
SIXTH
Monte Grappa
FIRST
SIXTH
FOURTH
EIGHTH
TWELFTH
III
332
TENTH
FIFTH
THIRD
TREVISO
TRIESTE
Adige R
Lake Garda
Vicenza
NINTH
VERONA
PADUA
VENICE
Cattaro
Villafranca di Verona
AMERICAN ZONE
5 SEP
DIAZ
Gulf of Venice
Parenzo
Mantua
Adige R

the Austrians, and most Hungarian units either openly rebelled or headed home to protect their lands as the empire crumbled.

By 31 October, the 332d Infantry became the lead element of the XIV Corps as it crossed the Piave in pursuit of the retreating Austrians. On 3 November, in the fog and rain of the northern Italian autumn, the Americans were the first Allied infantry to reach the Tagliamento River bridgehead, defended by five hundred Austrian troops. Colonel Wallace ordered the 2d Battalion to make the crossing over a damaged bridge the next morning. After sending patrols to scout the enemy positions across the river, Major Scanland ordered his men to cross the Tagliamento and capture the bridgehead. At dawn on the cloudy, gray morning of 4 November, the battalion quietly filed across a narrow footpath and advanced toward the Austrian positions. The defenders were caught by surprise—most of the Austrian artillery and machine guns had been presighted and ranged for the far bank—and overshot the attackers. After twenty minutes, during which the Americans suffered six wounded and one soldier killed, the doughboys captured fifty-two Austrian prisoners, many while attempting a hasty retreat. As 1st Sgt. Joseph L. Lettau of regimental headquarters described, "The Austrians returned a hot fire, but the boys pressed on as true brothers of the doughboys in France. On and on they went and when, at last, close quarters were reached they showed they had forgotten nothing they had learned in the bayonet drills back at Camp Sherman [in Ohio]. They were irresistible. The enemy broke and fled."

After Scanland's troops overran the forward Austrian positions, they advanced under cover of the battalion's machine guns. By 0900, they captured the town of Codroipo, seizing medical supplies, food stores, wheeled transportation, and "two and one-half million dollars' worth of ammunition (all calibers)" along with a German 77-mm. gun. At 1500, the battalion split up, with two companies guarding the spoils at Codroipo and another two advancing up the Treviso-Udine road to the town of Villaorba. The American attack had thoroughly blindsided the Austrians—not least because Austria had signed an armistice with Italy on 3 November in Padua, which was to go into effect the next day.

As soldiers of the 332d Infantry watched thousands of Austro-German prisoners file into a British internment camp, they wondered if they would be sent to fight in Bavaria. The southern roads to Berlin were now open to the Allies and the 332d, still

Soldiers of the 332d Infantry throwing grenades
(National Archives)

eager for action, soon marched north in anticipation of a planned invasion of Germany through the Alpine ranges. The regiment passed through San Lorenzo, Pozzuolo, Lovaria, and Ipplis before word came on 11 November that the war with Germany was over. The cheers from the troops were short-lived as occupation duties called for the regiment to police the Austrian territory around the Gulf of Venice and the Balkans.

The regiment's 1st and 3d Battalions initially went to Gorizia, Austria. The town had been the site of bitter fighting, as it was part of a territory that Italy had hoped to secure when it entered the war in 1915. The two battalions subsequently redeployed to Fiume, where the native Austrian population greeted them warmly. The 2d Battalion, meanwhile, was deployed to the Dalmatian coast of Montenegro; most troops went to Cattaro (or Kotor, as it would be renamed after the war) while a smaller group went to Cetinje. Their peacekeeping duties included quelling violent disputes between Montenegrin rebels—who were vying for their country's independence—and occupying Italian soldiers. Despite exchanging small-arms fire in several ambushes, the Americans suffered no casualties.

By February 1919, the 332d Infantry was preparing to return to the United States. Assembling in Genoa, the regiment departed by companies and battalions as vessels became available, with the last troops leaving on 5 April. On 21 April, the reconstituted regiment formed up in New York's Washington Square and paraded through cheering crowds up Fifth Avenue to Central Park where New York's Mayor John F. Hylan welcomed them. Italy's consul general, Romolo Tritoni, presented the regiment with a special gold medal on behalf of the Italian government. After the celebrations ended, the men of the 332d departed for Camp Sherman, Ohio, and demobilization.

Analysis

The American contribution to the First World War was in many ways determined by the nature of the coalition within which it fought. Historian David Trask states that "coalition warfare is a most difficult enterprise. Victory comes to allies who persevere in the trying but essential effort to cooperate effectively in the common cause despite inevitable conflicts of interest and outlook." Unlike the German-dominated Central Powers, the Allied Powers had no central actor to direct strategy or coordinate resources. The alliance between France, Great Britain, and Russia was a pact of theoretical equals, in which no single nation held sway. The American entry into the war did not alter this dynamic, but rather added another voice to discussions on strategy and resource allocation between the coalition members. Even after Ferdinand Foch took the position of generalissimo, he did not have command authority over the various national armies under his influence. Instead, the Allies relied on cooperation through negotiation.

The question of amalgamation was a particular sticking point in American-Allied relations, requiring almost constant renegotiation. The British and the French naturally wanted to take advantage of American manpower—a scarce resource after four years of trench warfare—by incorporating American troops directly into their units. The AEF's leaders balked at this idea, fearing that such an approach would obscure the U.S. contribution to the Allied war effort. The German Spring Offensives that began in March 1918, however, forced Pershing to moderate his hardline stance on amalgamation, and he allowed American units to participate in combat operations as part of Allied forces to varying degrees for the remainder of the war. This was more than a gesture of inter-Allied solidarity. With only scattered exceptions, such as the incorporation

of American companies or platoons into Allied formations along the lines of the successful Australian-American assault on Hamel, politics and national pride precluded the widespread employment of "small-scale amalgamation." Yet larger-scale amalgamation took place extensively during the final months of the war, with American regiments and divisions fighting under French, British, Belgian, and even Italian command on numerous occasions.

It is hard to overstate the moral impact of these kinds of amalgamation on America's allies. The French and the Italians were both especially welcoming, relying on the appearance of Americans in the battle zone to help rejuvenate their exhausted forces. However, it was the performance of the American soldiers in combat that truly earned the nation its prominent place among the victors. From Haig's displeasure at losing American divisions that were serving with the BEF in August to Mangin and Fayolle's praise for the 32d Division at Juvigny and the 2d Division at Blanc Mont Ridge, Allied commanders valued the doughboys' combat prowess, not simply their presence in the lines. As one British officer stated, "the Allies pushed the Germans just to crest of the hill, and it took just a little push added by the Americans to put them over."

In December 1918, Pershing ordered AEF GHQ to send a questionnaire to brigade and division commanders who had served with the British and French, and made the collected responses available to American officers. The lessons learned about coalition warfare during World War I would prove valuable as the United States grew into a position of world leadership. In addition, during World War II, American leaders such as General George C. Marshall Jr., General Douglas MacArthur, and General George S. Patton drew on their experiences dealing with Allies in France. Even those American commanders who did not serve on the Western Front, such as General Dwight D. Eisenhower or General Omar N. Bradley, could still look to the struggles and triumphs of 1917–1918 for guidance. Consequently, the experience of the United States in the Great War—its first large-scale effort at power projection overseas and its major contribution to the Allied victory—provided an educational template on industrialized coalition warfare for subsequent generations of Army leaders.

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

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