

# Over There

## *Celebrating the One Hundredth Anniversary of First Army*

“First in Deed”

### In the beginning...

The following provides a brief overview of the genesis of First Army following the United States entry into World War I...

After the United States entered the Great War on 6 April 1917, America rushed to prepare its small active force for war...a war shaped by technological advances achieved over the past four years of trench warfare in Europe. To confront the Central Powers of Imperial Germany and Austria-Hungary, however, America would need to increase its initial strength of 98,000 men, 45,000 of which were stationed abroad. The Selective Service Act of 1916 outlined a wartime strength of 286,000 Soldiers. Accordingly, the National Guard, numbering 27,000, would increase to 450,000. The ‘National Army’, referred to in the Act as a volunteer army, would grow in two increments of 500,000 each based on presidential direction. Despite these initial estimates, America’s new army would eventually grow to over six million men at its greatest strength.<sup>1</sup> As American troops slowly arrived in France and combat power increased, the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) published General Order 120 on 10 August 1918, forming the First United States Army under the command of General John J. Pershing, and headquartered in La Ferte-sous-Jouarre, France.<sup>2</sup> The formation of an American army established parity with British and French forces and mitigated their desire to use American manpower in a piecemeal fashion, scattered across their already exhausted formations. It also consolidated American forces under their own national command, standing and fighting as a single entity. Supported by President Wilson, General Pershing repeatedly insisted, despite pleas (and threats) from his allied counterparts, on the principle of American unity of command. The formation of First Army, and successive numbered armies, organized American forces as a fresh, powerful, effective fighting force more than capable of holding its own against battle-hardened enemies.

By September 1918, First Army, in its first major engagement,

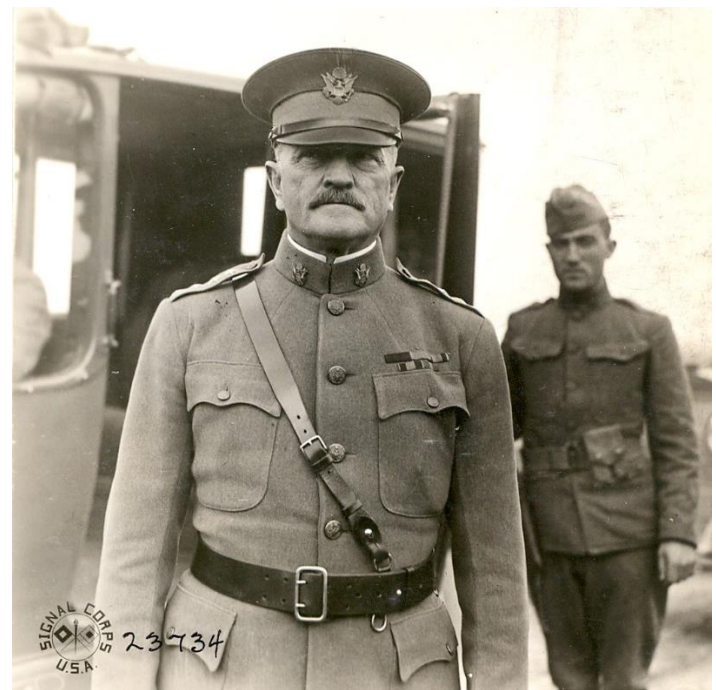
successfully cleared the Saint-Mihiel area of German occupation and prepared to shift its operations to the south in a new offensive near the Argonne Forest and the Meuse River. The effort to organize and train the AEF as a unified American command had proved successful and greatly lifted the morale and confidence of Pershing’s young army, beginning to turn the tide of the war that had stagnated into stalemate.

For your further interest, the second page of the review contains a copy of General Order 120 and an excerpt of the original army organization in 1917-18. Thanks for reading!

### Editor’s Note

We are endeavoring to begin a new series of newsletters to report on the activities of the First Army in World War One and World War Two. These newsletters are intended to be a means to educate First Army about our own history and to inspire discussion. The intent is to publish a weekly newsletter until the First Army Centennial highlighting First Army history as well as relevant WWI and WWII history. Additionally, the newsletter will spotlight the First Army Brigades and Battalions history as well as a little Army humor.

If you have a request for additional information or you would like to have a specific topic covered please contact 1st Lt. Kevin Braafladt [kevin.d.braafladt.mil@mail.mil](mailto:kevin.d.braafladt.mil@mail.mil) for story submission requirements. All stories are subject to editing by the First Army Historian.



GEN John J. Pershing arriving to inspect American Forces in France. 1918

1. CMH Pub 30-21; *AMERICAN MILITARY HISTORY*; VOLUME 1

2. *The Genesis of the American First Army*. Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1938. Print. Historical Section of the Army War College Pg. 70-71

## General Order 120

## APPENDIX 6

## GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

GENERAL ORDERS }  
No. 120 }

FRANCE, July 24, 1918.

I. In accordance with authority contained in War Department cablegram (No. 743), the First Army, American Expeditionary Forces, is organized as indicated hereinafter, to take effect August 10, 1918.

II. The First Army, American Expeditionary Forces, will consist of the following organizations:

## A. HEADQUARTERS

Station—La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, Department of Seine-et-Marne, France.

Commander—Gen. John J. Pershing, United States Army.

General Staff:

Chief of Staff—Lieut. Col. Hugh A. Drum, G. S.  
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1—Lieut. Col. Jens Bugge, G. S.  
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2—Lieut. Col. Willey Howell, G. S.  
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3—Col. Robert McCleave, G. S.  
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4—Lieut. Col. John L. DeWitt, G. S.  
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-5—Lieut. Col. Lewis H. Watkins, G. S.

Chief of Artillery—Maj. Gen. Edward F. McGlachlin, N. A.

Administrative and technical services:

Adjutant General—Col. Joseph F. Barnes, A. G. D.  
Inspector General—Col. Jacob C. Johnson, I. G. D.  
Judge Advocate—Lieut. Col. Blanton Winship, J. A.  
Chief Quartermaster—Maj. George Luberoff, Q. M. R. C.  
Chief Surgeon—Col. Alexander N. Stark, M. C.  
Chief Engineer—Brig. Gen. Jay J. Morrow, N. A.  
Chief Signal Officer—Lieut. Col. Parker Hitt, S. C.  
Chief Ordnance Officer—Col. Edward P. O'Hern, Ordnance Department, N. A.  
Chief of Air Service—Col. William Mitchell, S. C.  
Chief of Motor Transport Corps—Col. William H. Winters, Q. M. C.  
Chief of Chemical Warfare Service—(To be designated later).  
Chief of Tank Corps—(To be designated later).

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Provost marshal—(To be designated later).

Headquarters Troop—Maj. Edward C. McGuire, 3d Cavalry.

Such assistants as may be necessary will be designated in orders of the First Army.

## B. TROOPS AND SERVICES

Such troops and services as may be designated by confidential instructions of these headquarters.

\* \* \* \* \*

BY COMMAND OF GENERAL PERSHING:

JAMES W. McANDREW,  
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

ROBERT C. DAVIS,  
Adjutant General.

## Organization of an Army in 1917-1918

## APPENDIX 7

## THE ORGANIZATION OF AN ARMY IN 1917-18\*

The general distribution of duties of the staff sections of an army was as follows:

**Chief of staff.**—Assisted the commander in supervising and coordinating the activities of the command; directed and coordinated the work of the five sections of the general staff; acted in the name of the commander during his absence.

**Deputy chief of staff.**—Assistant to chief of staff, acted as such during his absence.

**Secretary to the general staff.**—Maintained office of temporary record for the chief of staff; channel through which all communications passed; kept the war diary.

**Assistant chief of staff, G-1.**—Matters regarding personnel, replacements, billeting, circulation and traffic regulations, captured personnel and material, organization and equipment, activities of various civilian organizations such as Young Men's Christian Association, Knights of Columbus, etc.

**Assistant chief of staff, G-2.**—Matters pertaining to military information of the enemy; preparation, reproduction, and issue of maps and charts; survey and topographical work; flash and sound ranging.

**Assistant chief of staff, G-3.**—All matters relating to combat operations, such as strategical and tactical studies, formulation of combat plans, and issue of combat orders and instructions; journal of operations; movement and concentration of troops.

**Assistant chief of staff, G-4.**—Matters relating to supply, construction, and transportation; hospitalization and evacuation of sick and wounded; labor and labor troops; replacement of animals; remount and veterinary services.

**Assistant chief of staff, G-5.**—Matters regarding instruction and training, tactical inspections.

**Chiefs of Artillery, administrative and technical services.**—The Chief of Artillery and the chiefs of the administrative and technical services performed the duties pertaining to their respective branches.

Tables of Organization for an army included in the general organization project, and later revised as new needs arose, provided for three or more corps and certain special troops called army troops, which were needed for combat and for maintenance of a force of this size in the field. In general these army troops\* included the following:<sup>159</sup>

**Artillery**—75-mm, carried on trucks; heavy tractor drawn, railway, and antiaircraft types.

**Air Service**—Observation, pursuit, and bombing squadrons, and captive balloon companies.

**Engineer**—Mining, water supply, construction, surveying and printing, road construction, camouflage, electrical and mechanical, searchlight, pontoon.†

**Signal**—Telephone, telegraph, radio, and pigeon.

**Medical**—Evacuation and veterinary hospitals and trains.

**Ordnance**—Ammunition and matériel.

**Quartermaster**—Remount depots and trains.

**Flash and Sound Ranging, Chemical Warfare Service, and Military Police.**

Additional units, not included in the organization provided for Army troops but needed for special operations or purposes, were attached from a pool controlled by General Headquarters, American Expeditionary Forces.

The Tables of Organization under which the First Army was organized were as follows:<sup>159</sup>

\* For details of the organization of army troops, see p. 74.

† In addition to these, light railway and quarry units were supplied from S. O. S. troops as needed.

<sup>159</sup>(13, GO 31); (59, GO 40); (52, Memo, July 29, 1918); (68); (21c, p. 21).