

MEUSE-ARGONNE CAMPAIGN, SEP-NOV 1918

A Working Bibliography of MHI Sources

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OVERVIEW

At the conclusion of the St. Mihiel operation, Pershing marched his half-million strong First Army by night to join Foch's offensive in the Meuse-Argonne sector. He moved them north through the Meuse Valley with the Argonne Forest to their left and the Air Valley to their right, and was ready to attack with three corps the morning of 26 Sep.

Foch's intent was to create a pincers movement to cut off the Germans in their rear. British troops would advance between Péronne and Lens toward Aulnoye, while the Americans would attack toward Mézières. Aulnoye and Mézières were rail and supply centers in the German rear area, and the loss of either would seriously disrupt their operations. Simultaneously, the Belgian-French-British force in Flanders would attack, as would French troops in the Oise-Aisne region. Facing the Allies, the Germans formed three heavily-fortified lines in two sectors, Army Groups under the command of von Gallwitz and the

Crown Prince, respectively. Foch correctly expected them to attempt an orderly retreat, and his detailed plans reflected his aim of preventing a staged enemy retirement.

Pershing selected a twenty-mile wide zone between the Meuse on his east and the rough Argonne Forest on his west as his point of heaviest concentration. He hoped to advance into open areas behind the heavily-fortified German defenses at Montfaucon, Cunel and Barricourt, where he would be within striking distance of an exposed enemy flank. This would allow his flank, supported by the French on his left, to attack Mézières. His plan succeeded through the first two German defense lines in Meuse-Argonne, but the attack stalled in front of the third. By successful coordination of air and ground assets, the latter component, including the newly-formed—and fresh—Second Army American Army, was able to break its way through the third line and lengthen its front. By early November, Germans were fully on the defensive, two more American corps joined the line and the Sedan-Mézières road was denied to the German logistical effort. By the time the armistice was signed, 22 American and 4 French divisions occupied a line from Verdun to the Argonne.

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