

# **LA FAYETTE, WE ARE HERE !**

## **THE UNITED STATES IN THE GREAT WAR**

1 FEBRUARY – 9 APRIL 2017

**The Army Museum in Paris is marking the centenary of the Great War with a documentary exhibition on the United States and its relations with France during the conflict.**

On 4 August 1914, the United States declared that it would remain neutral in the conflict. On 19 August, President Thomas Woodrow Wilson made a speech in the Senate, declaring that no one on US territory and under US jurisdiction would take part in the war, directly or indirectly, and asking everyone to observe strict and impartial neutrality. Nevertheless, a number of Americans enlisted with the French and British armies on an individual basis, while others tried to help without the use of weapons, for example, by volunteering with relief organisations.

The United States did not join the Allies in the war until much later. Its entry into the war was the result of several factors: the collateral effects of the submarine warfare waged by Germany; the acts of sabotage committed by German agents to prevent equipment deliveries to the Allies, and the shift in American public opinion under the influence of the press. Publication of the Zimmerman telegram, revealing Germany's plan for an alliance with Mexico against the United States, led President Wilson to ask Congress to declare war against Germany on 2 April 1917. Congress voted for war on 6 April.

The exhibition places the US entry into the war in the context of the American War of Independence, led by the Insurgents in thirteen colonies against Great Britain from 1775 to the treaties of Versailles and Paris in 1783. It explores the role played by Lafayette in 1777 and the support the French Expeditionary Force led by the Count de Rochambeau provided to George Washington's troops.



*4 July 1917: General Pershing striding across the main courtyard of the Hôtel des Invalides followed by President Raymond Poincaré at the Independence Day celebration.*  
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### DID YOU KNOW?

During a trip to the United States in 1921 to reaffirm the ties of friendship between France and the US and in remembrance of World War I, Marshall Foch met a group of Native Americans. To mark the occasion, Foch wore a long thick fur coat and temporarily swapped his kepi for a feathered Indian headdress.

*Marshall Foch meeting with Native Americans during his trip to the US in 1921.*  
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Photographs, paintings, posters, monuments and heritage items from the Army Museum's collections will be presented on 22 panels arranged around the main courtyard's pillars. They depict figures such as Lafayette, Pershing, Foch and Wilson, as well as the American Independence Day celebration held at the Invalides on 4 July 1917, the Sammies as represented by artists, and the transport of troops and equipment.

### Online Series

As for all documentary exhibitions organised by the Army Museum, the event's content will be available on the museum's website as a series throughout the exhibition. It will then remain on the site in the form of a virtual exhibition.

### Partners

The Army Museum benefited from the help of several institutional partners in organising the exhibition, including the Communication and Audiovisual Production Company for the Department of Defence and the Library of International Contemporary Documentation at Paris Ovest Nanterre La Défense University. The museum was also given access to the collections held by the Library of Congress in Washington.

The exhibition has been endorsed by both the First World War Centenary Partnership Programme in France and the American WWI Centennial Commission.



### Curator – Army Museum

**Sylvie Picolet**, historical research, educational action and mediation division.

### Practical information

Open every day from 10.00 to 17.00, free admission

Main Courtyard Galleries

Army Museum, Hôtel des Invalides, 129 Rue de Grenelle, 75007 Paris

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