

Headquarters Air Service

First Army

American Expeditionary Forces

September 11th, 1918

Battle Orders No. 1

1. The enemy is losing ground, personnel and materiel at all points of the front on which the allied armies are attacking. On the front of the first Army he is holding the line Pont-sur-Seille—St. Mihiel—Fresnes-en-Woevre—Chatillon-sous-les-Cotes in his old positions. His air service is estimated at 150 pursuit, 120 reconnaissance and 25 battle air planes, which is being re-inforced. The strength of his ground troops is estimated at about seven divisions, with from 3 to 5 divisions in reserve. The strength and morale of these divisions is reported low. There are signs that he intends to withdraw from his front lines and make his main resistance at some point further to the rear.

2. The First Army attacks on the whole front on 12 September, 1918. The hour of the attack will be 5H 12 September, 1918. The First and Fourth Corps will attack at H hour. The 5th Corps will attack at H hour plus three hours. The 2nd French Colonial Corps will attack as follows: —

The attack west of the 4th Corps at H hour plus one hour. The attack south of the 5th Corps at H plus four hours. The artillery bombardment will commence as follows: — 1st and 4th Corps H minus four hours. The Second Colonial Corps will attack at H minus four hours.

3. OUR AIR SERVICE WILL TAKE THE OFFENSIVE AT ALL POINTS WITH THE OBJECT OF DESTROYING THE ENEMY'S AIR SERVICE, ATTACKING HIS TROOPS ON THE GROUND AND PROTECTING OUR OWN AIR AND GROUND TROOPS.

4. (a) The Corps Sectors of reconnaissance are as announced in Annex #3, Field Orders #9, Appendix #4, dated September 7th, 1918. Particular attention is to be paid to minute reconnaissance of the enemy lines to determine whether he has been re-inforced or has changed his dispositions. Important information [involving] immediate action obtained by Corps Air Services will be sent by telephone, radio or courier airplane to the C.A.S., 1st Army or to the nearest brigade of the French Air Division.

(b) The 1st Army Observation Group (Reynolds) will execute the reconnaissance and surveillance as ordered in the plan of reconnaissance, Annex #3, Field Orders #9, Appendix #4, dated September 7th, 1918. Particular attention is to be paid to minute reconnaissance of the enemy lines to determine whether he has been re-inforced or has changed his dispositions. Important information involving immediate action obtained by Air Services will be sent by telephone, radio or courier plane to the C.A.S., 1st Army, or to the nearest brigade of the French Air Division. Three airplanes will be held ready to execute any special reconnaissance ordered.

(c) The Army Artillery Group (Block) will execute the observation ordered for the Artillery to which it is attached. Important information involving immediate action obtained by Air Services

will be sent by telephone, radio or courier airplane to the C.A.S., 1st Army or to the nearest brigade of the French Air Division.

(d) The First Pursuit Wing, (Atkinson) will cover the front Pont-sur-Seille—St. Mihiel, inclusive. An absolute barrage will be established against enemy aviation, our own observation aviation will be protected and an attack against all balloons exposing themselves on this front will be made early in the morning. After 9:00 A.M., one pursuit group loaded with bombs will be held in reserve to be used for the purpose of attack of hostile troops or convoys on the ground, so as to be ready to leave the ground 15 minutes after the receipt of the order.

The First Bombardment Group will attack the hostile division and corps posts of command and such enemy positions as present a suitable target.

The right flank of the First Pursuit Wing will be protected by the First Brigade (French) Aerial Division and the Aerial defenses of the 8th French Army. Close liaison will be maintained by the 1st Pursuit Wing (Atkinson) with both of these and with the Army Corps so as to keep close track of the advance of the troops.

(e) The First Pursuit Group (Hartney) will cover the front Chatillon-sous-les-Cotes—St. Mihiel, inclusive. A barrage will be maintained against hostile aviation, observation aviation will be protected and hostile balloons will be attacked opposite the front of the 4th Corps.

The left flank will be protected by the aerial defenses of the 2nd French Army with which close liaison will be maintained. Close liaison will also be kept with the Corps Air Services so as to keep track of the advance of the troops.

(f) The Army Night Bombing and Reconnaissance Wing (Major Villome) will execute the night reconnaissance directed in accordance with the schedule provided for. Railroad centers and airdromes will be bombed systematically as provided for in the plan of employment. Particular attention will be paid to the German Night Bombing Airdromes.

(g) The French Air Division (Vaulgrenant) will take the offensive against the enemy's aviation and troops on the ground. The Brigades will execute successive attacks, passing over both sides of the St. Mihiel salient. On the right (east) of the area opposite the front of the 1st and 4th Army Corps and on the left of the second Colonial Corps, the meeting point of these two axes being approximately the area Jonville-Hadenville-Chambley. The principle being to operate along the axes indicated so as to take the enemy aviation in reverse and force it towards our lines. Attacks will be made against the ground troops or the enemy when the occasion offers.

The bombardment aviation will attack the objects on the ground which show themselves to be the most dangerous as operations develop.

Provision will be made for guarding the 1st Army's right flank against hostile air attack. Close liaison will be maintained by radio and courier planes with the Corps Air Services so as to insure the air division's cooperation in the attack.

5. The equipment section will hold itself ready to insure the supply and movement of any units required.

6. The Army Dropping Ground for messages from airplanes is a point two and one-half kilometers south-east of Ligny-en-Barrois. The Army Landing Field is Maulan, six kilometers

west of Ligny-en-Barrois. The First Day Bombardment Group will provide a detail of four command airplanes to take station at Maulan, beginning at 7:00 A.M., September 12th.

7. Reports will reach the Chief of Air Service at Headquarters, Air Service, First Army, Ligny-en-Barrois.

A liaison officer from each Corps Air Service, each Wing or independent group of the Army Air Service, and the French Aerial Division will report at the Headquarters, C.A.S., 1st Corps, at 21-00 H each day to receive orders.

William Mitchell

Read and explained to assembled

Corps Air Service Commanders
 Group Commanders
 Wing Commanders
 Chief of Staff of the Air Division
 Staff of the C.A.S., 1st Army at 15-30, September 11th, 1918, without giving H hour.

Copies by an officer to —

C-S, 1st Army
 G-3, 1st Army
 G-2, 1st Army
 Corps Observation Wing, (Brereton)
 C.A.S., 1st Corps (Hall)
 C.A.S., 4th Corps (Anderson)
 C.A.S., 2nd C.A.C., (Pennes)
 C.A.S., 5th Corps (Christy)
 1st Observation Group (Reynolds)
 Artillery Observation Group (Block)
 1st Pursuit Wing (Atkinson)
 2nd Pursuit Group (Johnson)
 3rd Pursuit Group (Thaw)
 G.C. 16 (Meanig)
 1st Bombardment Group (Dunsworth)
 Night Bombardment Wing (Villome)
 1st Pursuit Group (Hartney)
 1st Air Division (Vaulgrenant)
 Independent Air Forces (Trenchard)

Source: The U.S. Air Service in World War I, Volume III, compiled and edited by Maurer Maurer (Washington, D.C.: The Office of Air Force History, 1979) 137-140.