

② American Power Tips the Balance

MAIN IDEA *The United States mobilized a large army and navy to help the Allies achieve victory.*

The United States was not prepared for war, but it launched a draft and quickly put about 3 million men in uniform. Women were not drafted, but the navy accepted women volunteers as nurses and secretaries. African Americans served in separate units; some were trained as officers.

The government took steps to increase the amount of shipping available so it could transport the soldiers and their supplies to Europe. Along with Great Britain, the United States began sending merchant ships in large convoys guarded by naval vessels. This change helped cut the number of ships lost to submarine attacks.

At first, American soldiers were scattered among other armies, replacing men killed or wounded. General John J. Pershing insisted that the American army fight as a whole. These troops—far fresher than the other Allied soldiers—helped throw back some major German attacks. By October 1918, the Germans were weakened.

New weapons made the fighting in World War I very destructive. Machine guns, tanks, and gas warfare could kill soldiers in large numbers. Fighting took to the air, as both sides used war planes. Soldiers suffered from disease and hardship as well. While 48,000 American soldiers died in combat, another 62,000 died of disease.

In November of 1918, German sailors, soldiers, and civilians mutinied, refusing to continue the war. The German kaiser abdicated his throne, and the new government surrendered.