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**Cablegrams Exchanged  
Between General  
Headquarters, American  
Expeditionary Forces  
and the War Department  
1917-1919**



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*Records of the American Expeditionary Forces*  
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*Record Group 120*  
in the National Archives Building

CABLEGRAMS EXCHANGED BETWEEN GENERAL  
HEADQUARTERS, AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES  
AND THE WAR DEPARTMENT  
1917-1919

Reproduced on the 19 rolls of this microfilm publication are nine series of regular, confidential, and courier cablegrams exchanged between General Headquarters, American Expeditionary Forces (GHQ, AEF), and the War Department from June 1917 to August 1919. The publication includes all cablegrams exchanged between the two headquarters with the exception of the series listing names of casualties sustained by the AEF. The records reproduced in this microfilm publication are file copies from the Cable Division of the Adjutant General's Office, GHQ, AEF, and are part of the Records of the American Expeditionary Forces (World War I), 1917-23, Record Group 120.

On May 26, 1917, Maj. Gen. John J. Pershing, named commander of the American Expeditionary Forces of World War I by General Order 1, Headquarters, AEF, announced the formation of a staff of 31 officers. Two days later Pershing and his staff sailed for Europe, arriving in England on June 9 and in France on June 13. The headquarters of the AEF was located in Paris from June 13 to September 1, 1917, when it was moved to Chaumont. Headquarters of the AEF was organized on July 5, 1917, by General Order 8, Headquarters, AEF, into a General Staff and an Administrative and Technical Staff in addition to the Chief of Staff, the Secretary to the General Staff, and the personal staff of the Commander in Chief.

The General Staff was divided into five sections: an Administrative Policy Section in charge of the organization and equipment of troops, replacements, tonnage, priority of overseas shipments, and auxiliary welfare associations; an Intelligence Section in charge of censorship, enemy intelligence, and gathering and disseminating information; an Operations Section in charge of strategic plans and supervision of combat operations; a Training Policy Section in charge of education and supervision of training schools; and a Coordinating Section in charge of regulating operations of supply services, construction, transport arrangements for combat, and hospitalization and evacuation of the sick and wounded. The Headquarters Commandant was in charge of headquarters troops, provost and other guards, billeting, messes, transportation, and property.

The Administrative and Technical Staff consisted of the Adjutant General, the Inspector General, the Judge Advocate, the Chief Quartermaster, the Chief Surgeon, the Chief Engineering Officer, the Chief Ordnance Officer, the Chief Signal Officer, the Chief of the Air Service, the General Purchasing Agent, the Chief of the Gas Service, the Director General of Transportation, the Commanding General of the Line of Communication, the chief

of the Red Cross, and the Provost Marshal General. This organization remained fairly stable until February 1918 when the staff was revised by General Order 31, GHQ, AEF.

The officers appointed to General Headquarters in February 1918 were the Commander in Chief and his personal staff, the Chief of Staff, the five Assistant Chiefs of Staff, the Adjutant General, the Inspector General, the Judge Advocate, the Headquarters Commandant, and the Chiefs of Artillery and the Tank Corps. The offices of the Assistant Chiefs of Staff were redesignated: First Section, G-1 (Administration); Second Section, G-2 (Intelligence); Third Section, G-3 (Operations); Fourth Section, G-4 (Coordination); and Fifth Section, G-5 (Training). This remained the basic organization of General Headquarters during its stay in France.

An increased number of troops made greater coordination necessary in procurement, transportation, and supply. By the reorganization of February 1918, the functions of the Line of Communication and the Technical Services were removed from General Headquarters and designated as Service of the Rear. The Commanding General of the Service of the Rear became responsible for coordinating activities of the Chief Quartermaster, the Chief Engineer, the Chief Surgeon, the Chief Signal Officer, the Chief Ordnance Officer, the Chief of the Air Service, the General Purchasing Agent, the Chief of the Gas Service, the Chief of Utilities, and the Provost Marshal General. The headquarters of the Service of the Rear--including the Commanding General, his staff, and the Chiefs of the Technical Services--was transferred to Tours. On March 13, 1918, the designation of the headquarters at Tours was changed to the Services of Supply.

After the armistice of November 11, 1918, the American Army moved into Germany and set up an advance headquarters at Trier. The Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 20, 1919. Two weeks later Headquarters of the American Forces in Germany relieved GHQ, AEF, of its duties in Germany. GHQ, AEF, returned to the United States in September 1919, setting up an office in Washington. On August 31, 1920, GHQ, AEF, was discontinued.

The responsibilities connected with handling records, orders, correspondence, and coordinating communications of GHQ, AEF, fell to the Adjutant General, AEF, who established a number of divisions to carry out these duties. Two of them, the Cable Division and the Code Division, were created in June 1917. The functions of the Cable Division included copying, extracting, indexing, and filing cablegrams sent to the War Department and received from Washington, after their release from the Code Room. The first head of the Cable Division, Capt. Charles C. Williams, handled all functions himself, but when GHQ, AEF, moved from Paris to Chaumont, the increased volume of work required additional staff. By the end of the war the Cable Division contained three sections, Administrative, Indexing, and Extracting and Copying, employing 24 clerks and an officer.

The Code Division, which consisted of 39 clerks and five officers in January 1919, encoded paragraphs, numbered them, lettered subparagraphs, and transmitted them from the Code Room to the War Department when there were enough paragraphs to justify a cablegram. Code Division clerks also decoded cablegrams received from the War Department and prepared for the Cable Division five plain language copies of both incoming and outgoing daily cablegrams and three copies of all confidential cablegrams. The Cable Division retained one copy of the daily cablegrams for its own use and distributed the remaining ones to General Pershing, his Chief of Staff, and to the Adjutant General, AEF, who received two copies. Upon receipt of the Division copy, Captain Williams or his Chief Clerk indicated opposite each paragraph the individual or department to whom the paragraph would go and then turned the cablegrams over to the Extracting and Copying Section to prepare and send out the extracts. This Section also made one or two copies of the complete cablegram for the Commanding General, Services of Supply; Secretary of the General Staff; G-1 to G-5 Sections of the General Staff; Pershing's aides; Personnel Division; Tonnage Section of G-1; General Purchasing Agent; Chief of Artillery; and the Chief of the Tank Corps.

Captain Williams determined the distribution of confidential cablegrams, which was more restricted and irregular than distribution of daily cablegrams. Although many confidential cablegrams were so designated because they contained information the release of which at the time might have affected national security adversely, just as many were marked confidential simply because they included personal remarks or observations regarding officers, enlisted men, and civilians serving with or hoping to serve with the AEF in France.

In July 1918 the War Department authorized sending routine messages by courier to reduce the volume of cable traffic. This action created two series of courier cablegrams, extracted and distributed in the usual manner.

The nine series of cablegrams reproduced in this microfilm publication contain a number of distinctive markings and marginal notes. In the margins opposite many paragraphs appear two numbers separated by a letter; e.g., "131R5," "117S19," etc. The number preceding the letter is the cablegram number, the letter the cablegram series ("R" for received, "S" for sent), and the last number the paragraph of the cablegram. The notes indicate the number and paragraph of the cablegram replying to the query in the paragraph annotated. For example, in paragraph 19 of cablegram 117 sent from GHQ, AEF, the message reads: "For Chief Signal Officer. Research and Inspection Division personnel urgently needed. Has any part sailed. If so, request names officers and number of soldiers with probable date of arrival." Beside this

paragraph is written, "See 131R5." Paragraph five of cablegram 131 received from the War Department states: "For Colonel Russel: Your Number 117, paragraph nineteen, personnel of research and inspection division practically complete and arrangements are being made to sail. Names and number will be sent in a few days. Squier [Chief Signal Officer]."

Besides references to other cablegrams, the margins often contain abbreviations of offices and divisions of the AEF added at the time of receipt from the Code Division to indicate distribution of extracts. Among the more common abbreviations are CQM (Chief Quartermaster), CEO (Chief Engineer Officer), COO (Chief Ordnance Officer), and CSO (Chief Signal Officer).

During the early 1930's the Historical Section of the Army War College surveyed the cablegrams reproduced here in preparation for a documentary history of American participation in the war, eventually published in 1948 by the Historical Division, Department of the Army, as *The United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919*. Examiners scrutinized each document, determined whether to include it in the published volumes, and indicated their decision by stamping each one "Accepted," "Doubtful," or "Rejected."

The documents reproduced in this microfilm publication are no longer security-classified. Some were confidential at the time of their creation and had this classification typed on them. The Adjutant General's Office reviewed the classification of this entire series in December 1947 and stamped almost every folder, file cover, or cablegram "CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED." The National Archives and Records Service has since reviewed and declassified the few cablegrams overlooked or not declassified in 1947.

The names of the nine series of cablegrams comprising this microfilm publication are:

1. Main Series of Cablegrams From GHQ, AEF, to the War Department ("P" series), June 8, 1917-Aug. 30, 1919.
2. Confidential Cablegrams From GHQ, AEF, to the War Department ("P" confidential series), July 2, 1917-Aug. 30, 1919.
3. Weekly, Semi-Weekly, and Daily Summaries, Oct. 30, 1917-Apr. 26, 1918.
4. Summaries of Activities, U.S. Troops, Mar. 11-May 14, 1918.
5. American Official Communiques, May 16-Dec. 13, 1918.
6. Courier Cablegrams From GHQ, AEF, to the War Department ("CP" series), July 19, 1918-Aug. 29, 1919.

7. Main Series of Cablegrams From the War Department to GHQ, AEF ("A" series), June 14, 1917-Aug. 25, 1919.
8. Confidential Cablegrams From the War Department to GHQ, AEF ("A" confidential series), July 26, 1917-Aug. 30, 1919.
9. Courier Cablegrams From the War Department to GHQ, AEF ("CA" series), Aug. 8, 1918-Aug. 12, 1919.

All cablegrams in the nine series were sent to or received from the Adjutant General's Office at the War Department in Washington, although they were often addressed to or from the Secretary of War, the Chief of Staff, and other military and civilian officials. Cablegrams comprising the first six series were sent by GHQ, AEF, and those of the last three series were received by GHQ, AEF. All but the two series of courier cablegrams were transmitted by trans-Atlantic cable.

The series are arranged and numbered in chronological order. Sometimes cablegrams bear two different dates. The date at the top left is its official date, and at the top right is the date the Cable Division handled the cablegram. There are gaps in numbering within the "P" and "A" series because some were never sent, some were sent and then destroyed, and, most often, some were filed in other series of cablegrams. The Weekly, Semi-Weekly, and Daily Summaries, the Summaries of Activities, U.S. troops, and the first 12 American official communiques bear "P" series numbers as do the "P" confidential cablegrams. Similarly, the "A" confidential cablegrams bear "A" series numbers. In most cases a cross-reference sheet inserted in the "P" or "A" series of cablegrams documents removal of the cablegram and indicates the series in which it is filed. There are, however, no cross-reference sheets for cablegrams sent in 1919 by the U.S. Liquidation Commission that bear "P" series numbers and are filed separately. The series was not microfilmed for this publication.

### Series List and Description

1. Main Series of Cablegrams From GHQ, AEF, to the War Department ("P" series), June 8, 1917-Aug. 30, 1919.

The main series of cablegrams sent to the War Department covers a wide range of personnel, organization, and supply matters and documents day-to-day business at the highest levels of the AEF command. Among other subjects the cablegrams deal with requisitions for food and items of clothing, ordnance, motor and rail transport, and communication; promotion, transfer, and discharge of officers below the grade of general; commissioning of aviation cadets, army field clerks, and enlisted men; awards of the Distinguished Service Cross and recommendations for the Medal of Honor; and the return to the United States of AEF personnel and units. The "P" series of cablegrams contains very little information concerning combat operations or relations

with the British, French, and Italians. After August 1918 routine cablegrams relating to supplies for the AEF were sent to the War Department by Headquarters, Services of Supply. These cablegrams have not been reproduced in this publication.

2. Confidential Cablegrams From GHQ, AEF, to the War Department ("P" confidential series), July 2, 1917-Aug. 30, 1919.

The Cable Division filed confidential cablegrams and the daily or regular cablegrams separately but numbered all the cablegrams sent to the War Department in one sequence. Consequently, the first cablegram in this series is numbered 25 because the first 24 "P" cablegrams are daily cablegrams. Many of the cablegrams in this series consist of but one paragraph and are marked "Rush." The subject matter of this series includes the promotion, transfer, removal, and discharge of general officers; proposals to integrate units of the U.S. Army into the French and British Armies; Allied shipping priorities; the arrival, departure, repair, and sinking of American transports; Allied operations in France and Belgium; use of American troops in Russia and Italy; peace sentiments in belligerent countries; and manpower in France, Great Britain, and Germany.

3. Weekly, Semi-Weekly, and Daily Summaries, Oct. 30, 1917-Apr. 26, 1918.

This series of cablegrams, in addition to discussing military operations on all fronts, includes reports on political, social, and economic conditions in the belligerent countries. The summaries were dispatched on a weekly basis from October 31, 1917, through January 3, 1918; on a semiweekly basis from January 6 through March 24, 1918; and on a daily basis from March 25 through April 26, 1918. They are addressed to the Chief of Staff and are cross-referenced in the "P" series whose numbers they bear. They are all marked "Confidential," and the four earliest ones are filed with the "P" confidential cablegrams.

4. Summaries of Activities, U.S. Troops, Mar. 11-May 14, 1918.

Addressed to the Chief of Staff, the daily cablegrams are short, perfunctory accounts of military events from noon of one day to noon of the next. More often than not, they state simply that there is nothing to report.

5. American Official Communiques, May 16-Dec. 13, 1918.

Dispatched at least once a day and during periods of great military activity several times a day, the cablegrams are divided into four sections. Section A contains the official GHQ, AEF, report on military operations of the U.S. Army since issuance of the last communique. Section B includes citations of enlisted men and officers awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Section C



reports on military operations in the French and British sectors and changes in the German order of battle. Section D includes the text of important communiques received at GHQ, AEF, from American army, corps, or divisional headquarters. Not all communiques include the four sections, and the information in each section sometimes differs. Communiques numbered 1 to 227 are addressed to the Chief of Staff, and many are marked "Confidential."

6. Courier Cablegrams From GHQ, AEF, to the War Department ("CP" series), July 19, 1918-Aug. 29, 1919.

Courier cablegrams sent to Washington contained requests for supplies, announcements of the awarding of Distinguished Service Crosses and Distinguished Service Medals, requests for services of individual officers for positions with the AEF, and replies to inquiries from wives or other dependents about allotment checks of AEF personnel.

7. Main Series of Cablegrams From the War Department to GHQ, AEF ("A" series), June 14, 1917-Aug. 25, 1919.

Like the "P" series, the cablegrams received from the War Department cover a wide range of subject matter. Included are inquiries about the identity of casualties, of supplies and equipment ordered, and of personnel of various kinds; announcements of formation of commissions and boards, of personnel and units assigned to the AEF, and of appointment and promotion of officers; and authorizations to purchase animals.

8. Confidential Cablegrams From the War Department to GHQ, AEF ("A" confidential series), July 26, 1917-Aug. 30, 1919.

This series of cablegrams deals with the selection, assignment, and promotion of general officers in the AEF; the identity of units composing convoys ready to sail for France; civilian and military personnel in the AEF suspected of pro-German sympathies; and diplomatic maneuvering among the Allies and with the Central Powers. It also includes many personal inquiries from relatives in the United States regarding the health, whereabouts, and discharge of AEF personnel. The numbering of this series is similar to that of the "P" confidential series.

9. Courier Cablegrams From the War Department to GHQ, AEF ("CA" series), Aug. 8, 1918-Aug. 12, 1919.

These courier cablegrams include announcements of appointment and promotion of officers; lists of dependents eligible for allotments; inquiries on the whereabouts and health of members of the AEF; inventories of food and equipment shipped to France; weekly reports of personnel training at Air Service schools in the United States; and occasional references to special projects, such as the work of official AEF artists in France.

In addition to name and subject indexes to the series of cablegrams reproduced in this publication, the records of the American Expeditionary Forces (World War I), 1917-23, Record Group 120, also includes cablegrams exchanged between Headquarters, Services of Supply, and the War Department, 1918-19; cablegrams listing AEF casualties (Casualty Cablegrams) from GHQ, AEF, to the War Department, 1918-19; and cablegrams sent and received by the U.S. Liquidation Commission, 1919, the American Military Mission in Paris, 1917, and Edward R. Stettinius, Special Representative of the War Department in Europe, 1918. The Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1917- , Record Group 407, contain copies of the series of cablegrams reproduced here.

Jarritus Boyd wrote the introduction.

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