

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Department of Homeland Security World War I Centennial poster series, volume 5, 2017

Many of the federal agencies that combined to create the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2002 played significant and unique roles in the United States' participation in World War I (WWI). In commemoration of the war's centennial, this poster honors and explores these contributions and their connections to DHS, its mission, and several of its component agencies.

USCIS



Newly naturalized soldiers in Washington D.C. wave their naturalization certificates, September 13, 1918. National Archives.

USCIS's legacy agencies, the Bureau of Immigration and the Bureau of Naturalization, played significant roles in the U.S. effort during WWI. Their wartime activities began on April 6, 1917, the night the U.S. entered the war, when immigration officers received immediate orders to detain the crews of German merchant ships docked at U.S. ports. The Bureau of Immigration oversaw the internment of these German crews for most of the conflict.

WWI occurred during a period of mass immigration to the United States. Foreign-born soldiers composed more than 18 percent of the U.S. Army during WWI. Congress passed laws to expedite military naturalizations, which encouraged immigrants to enlist and enabled service members to naturalize before they shipped overseas. After the war, Congress extended military naturalization benefits to veterans. Ultimately, more than 300,000 WWI service members and veterans became U.S. citizens under these laws.

During the WWI Centennial, USCIS is proud to commemorate the history and contributions of its legacy agencies, their employees, and the many immigrants and naturalized citizens who served in the U.S. military during the war.

CBP



Customs Intelligence Bureau, 1919. CBP Collection.

During WWI, the Customs Service protected the nation's ports and commercial interests. Starting in 1914, customs collectors at major ports enforced President Wilson's Neutrality Proclamation. Agents determined which documents needed stamps required by the War Revenue Act of 1914 and worked to divert war supplies shipped under false documentation.

The Customs Service also aided the military by tracking warships in U.S. waters.

When the U.S. declared war in 1917, customs officers at major ports immediately confiscated enemy ships, impounded luggage, and inspected correspondence. They enforced export tariff provisions, searched for arms and ammunition intended for overseas, and ensured proper shipment of anything sent abroad.

The Customs Intelligence Bureau was created in New York in early 1918. The bureau scanned non-mail communications for sensitive information or enemy propaganda, searched ships, issued and inspected seamen's identification documents, examined outbound passengers for valuable or sensitive goods and information, and even inspected passengers and fumigated ships during the Spanish flu outbreak. The Bureau's wartime contributions received special commendations from the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Treasury; it was disbanded on July 7, 1919.

USCG



Members of the League of Coast Guard Women commemorate WWI losses at the Coast Guard Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery on November 9, 1928. Library of Congress.

Upon the declaration of war, every Coast Guard cutter and shore station received a coded dispatch that transferred its officers, enlisted men, vessels, and units to the operational control of the Navy. The Coast Guard contributed 223 commissioned officers, more than 4,500 enlisted men, 47 cutters, and 279 U.S. coastal stations to the Navy. Six ocean-going cutters travelled to Europe on convoy duty, while smaller cutters patrolled home waters. Coast Guard officers commanded

several naval air stations and transports in the U.S. and Europe. Others became captains of the port, the largest being the Port of New York, a duty the service still carries out today.

The Coast Guard suffered grievous losses. A German U-boat torpedoed the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) *Tampa*, resulting in the loss of all hands. Crewmen from the USCGC *Seneca* died trying to save the British merchant vessel *Wellington*. A German U-boat sunk the U.S. Lighthouse Service Lightship No. 71, but all aboard survived. Two cutters were lost due to collisions, USCGC *McCulloch* off San Francisco and USCGC *Mohawk* off Sandy Hook. Coast Guard veterans served heroically in WWI: they earned two Distinguished Service Medals, eight Gold Life-Saving Medals, 49 Navy Crosses, and 11 foreign awards. In 1919, the USCG returned to peacetime duty under the Department of the Treasury.

U.S. SECRET SERVICE



U.S. Secret Service agency seal and special agent badge, 1890-1971. The badge's five points represent Justice, Duty, Courage, Honesty, and Loyalty. U.S. Secret Service.

On May 14, 1915, President Woodrow Wilson directed the Secretary of the Treasury to have the Secret Service investigate espionage that may have violated the President's Neutrality Proclamation.

As a result, before and after the U.S. entered the war, the Secret Service investigated sabotage plots, food hoarding, illegal food monopolies, and individuals or businesses that traded food or commodities with the enemy. The Secret Service succeeded in these endeavors because of its established reputation for skill and honesty which commanded respect and encouraged civilians to cooperate and sometimes volunteer valuable information.

The Secret Service also continued to thwart counterfeiting and remained vigilant with its existing protective mission. That mission expanded in 1917 when Congress authorized protection for the President's immediate family and enacted legislation that made it a crime to threaten the President by mail or any other manner.



The poppy remains one of the most iconic symbols of WWI and its commemoration.

