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RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR AND AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES IN SIBERIA, 1918-20



This collection reproduces important letters, reports, memorandums, cablegrams, maps, charts, and other kinds of records relating to the activities of the American Expeditionary Forces in Siberia (hereafter, AEF in Siberia), 1918-20.

Date Range: 1918-1920

Content: 9,289 images

Source Library: National Archives (U.S.)

Detailed Description:

Source Note: Record Group 395: Records of U.S. Army Overseas Operations and Commands, 1898-1942, American Expeditionary Forces in Siberia, Historical Files, M-917.

After many months of prodding by America's Allies and top advisers in the State Department, President Woodrow Wilson agreed in early July 1918 to permit limited U.S. participation in an Allied expedition to Siberia. Among the reasons Wilson gave for this move by the United States were: to extricate Czechoslovak Armed Forces trapped in Siberia who had been attempting to reach the Western Front; to guard Allied military stores at Vladivostok; and to aid the Russian people themselves in "self-government and self-defense." Soon after Wilson's announcement, the War Department made speedy preparations for the transfer of the 27th and 31st Infantry Regiments from the Philippine Islands to Vladivostok. In addition, Maj. Gen. William S. Graves, who was designated commander of the expedition, received orders to select an additional 5,000 men and officers from his 8th Division stationed at Camp Fremont, Calif., to supplement these two infantry regiments.

On August 3, 1918, orders were sent from the Adjutant General in Washington to the two regiments in the Philippines and to Graves in California to embark for Vladivostok, where they were to establish American Headquarters. The bulk of the expeditionary forces landed in Siberia between August 15 and September 2. Immediately upon arrival, elements of the 27th and 31st Infantry Regiments took up guard duty along the Ussuri Railroad line from Vladivostok to Nikolsk. During late August and September the remainder of the 27th Infantry under Col. Henry Styer participated in an Allied offensive that pushed back Bolshevik forces in the Spasskoe-Ussuri region. By November most of this fighting had subsided, and the primary tasks of the AEF in Siberia became railroad garrison duty, care of prisoners of war, and guarding Allied supplies at Vladivostok.

In the Spring of 1919, an inter-Allied agreement on guarding the Trans-Siberian Railroad resulted in the assignment of American forces to several widely separated sections of the railroad line: Vladivostok to Nikolsk-Ussuri, Ugolnaya to the Suchan Mines, Spasskoe to Ussuri, and (1,700 miles further west) Verkhne-Udinsk to Mysovaya. During the period May through August 1919, the garrisons at Ugolnaya, Ussuri, Razdolnoe, the Suchan Mines, and Shkotovo sustained the heaviest casualties of the expedition because of strikes, riots, and partisan guerrilla activity. Conditions were so bad that American forces were removed from Shkotovo and the Suchan Mines in August. Other American garrisons, however, maintained their stations until January 9, 1920, when the War Department ordered the entire AEF in Siberia to assemble at Vladivostok in order to return to Manila. On April 1, 1920, General Graves closed his headquarters, and the last American units departed from Siberia.

Creation of the Historical Files

The Historical Files of the AEF in Siberia were the creation of the Historical Branch, War Plans Division (1918-21), and its successor, the Historical Section of the Army War College (1921-42). These historical units had the task of collecting, preserving, indexing, and publishing documents of historical value bearing on the American effort in the First World War. In the course of these duties the Historical Branch began to collect and classify the most important files on Siberia as early as 1920, the year the records of the AEF in Siberia were retired to Washington. The first page or cover sheet of many of the documents added to this series by the Historical Branch in 1920 and 1921 bear the stamp "HISTORICAL BRANCH," and immediately underneath this stamp is a file designation, usually "58-2." The Historical Section of the Army War College continued to add to the Historical Files of the AEF in Siberia until at least as late as 1942, although most of the records comprising this series were collected before 1930. The major sources of the records here reproduced are the files of the offices comprising the Headquarters of the AEF in Siberia, more especially the records of the Commander, the Chief of Staff, and the Military Intelligence Section; records of the 27th and 31st Infantry Regiments; and the records of the Adjutant General of the War Department. In most cases the Historical Branch and Section merely screened the important series of records of these offices and units and withdrew documents that they considered suitable for inclusion in this historical collection. On a few occasions, documents were sent to the historical units by other agencies of the War Department to be included in this series.

Arrangement

The present arrangement of these documents is according to the so-called War Department historical decimal classification scheme, a filing system devised by the Historical Section of the Army War College that, despite its name, lacks certain basic elements of a true decimal classification system. According to this scheme each file designation consists of two numbers separated by a hyphen. The number before the hyphen, the master number, represents the organizational entity to which the document was assigned; the number following the hyphen, the subject number, denotes the subject matter of the document. For example, General Graves' final report on the Siberian expedition bears the file designation "21-33.6." The number "21" is the master number for the AEF in Siberia, and "33" is the subject number for "Reports of Operations." The number "33.6" is the designation for "Special Reports of Operations." A descriptive list of folder contents and their file designations are highlighted below.

In addition to the file designations of the War Department historical decimal classification scheme and the file markings imposed by the Historical Branch described above, many of the records bear other file markings that indicate their original provenance. The most common is the blue stamp "HEADQUARTERS AM. EXP. FORCES VLADIVOSTOK, SIBERIA" followed by a penciled-in file designation from the War Department decimal classification scheme, and below this another stamp indicating the date the document was filed. Another common file designation found on the records here reproduced is one employed by the Adjutant General's Office, typical of which is the citation on the first page of General Graves' final report: AG 370.22 Rus[sian] Exp[edition] (5-26-20).

Description of Records

War Diaries

The bulk of the historical files of the AEF in Siberia consist of war diaries compiled at American Headquarters in Vladivostok. In addition, a few of the war diaries of the garrisons stationed at Shkotovo and the Suchan Mines during the summer of 1919 were included by the Historical Branch in this collection.

Almost from the beginning the Vladivostok war diaries, which were never forwarded to the War Department on a daily basis, diverged from the prescribed model. By mid-September 1918 the march table was eliminated because by then there were so few troop movements and combat actions. On the other hand, the diaries contain a great deal more information about economic, political, and social conditions in Siberia than the regulations stipulated.

The diaries include a great number of appendixes and enclosures in the form of maps, charts, cablegrams, memorandums, and newspaper clippings. The war diary of the AEF in Siberia Headquarters for any given day usually consists of one or more small war diary form sheets containing a brief listing and description of the contents of the diary, followed by an intelligence summary with its enclosures, followed in turn by English translations of pertinent items from Russian, Japanese, and Chinese newspapers published in or near eastern Siberia.

Local units at Shkotovo and the Suchan Mines submitted war diaries to Vladivostok, and the Historical Branch added to this collection those which documented the strikes of railroad workers and mineworkers and the heavy partisan guerrilla activity in these districts during the summer of 1919.

Operations Report

The Historical Files of the AEF in Siberia also include a number of semiannual, annual, and final reports of operations of the various offices and units comprising the expedition to Siberia. Among the most important of these are the two reports of General Graves, which together give an overall view of the Siberian expedition, and the report of Capt. Laurance B. Packard, an Intelligence officer, entitled "An Account of the American Expeditionary Forces in Siberia, August 1918 to March 1919." Enclosed with Graves' two reports were about 30 reports of offices and units under his command.

Subject Files

Other important records comprising the Historical Files of the AEF in Siberia are the four subject files of the Chief of Staff of the Siberian Expedition entitled "Japanese-American Relations" (21-4.7), "Civil Affairs" (21-21.3), "Field Messages" (21-32.16), and "Allies Orders [from Japanese Headquarters]" (21-32.7). These subject files consist of reports, memorandums, letters, cablegrams, telegrams, and maps. Each file is preceded by a list of contents that does not always reflect the present contents of the file. For example, the first 16 documents listed in the "Allies Orders" file are missing, while the last two documents in the "Field Messages" file are not included in the list of contents. In a few cases documents were transferred from one of these four files to another.

Descriptive List of Contents

21-4.7 Documents concerning Japanese-American relations, 1918-19.

21-7 Maj. Gen. William S. Graves Proclamation to the Russian People, Apr. 21, 1919.

21-7.1 President Wilson's reply to the Senate, informing that body of his reasons for sending and maintaining American forces in Siberia, July 22, 1919. (Sen. Doc. 60, 66th Cong., 1st sess).

21-10.5 Strength report showing the number of officers and enlisted men stationed in the Shkotovo Sector on Dec. 6, 1919.

21-11.4 "History." [Cross-reference sheets.]

21-12.3 "Casualties." [Cross-reference sheets.]

21-12.9 "Troops." [Cross-reference sheets.]

21-17.9 Report of Harry Lemons, representative of the American Library Association, on the society's activities in Siberia, Nov. 1918-May 1919.

21-19.3 Telegrams and memorandums pertaining to the organization and movement of troops to Siberia, July-Aug. 1918.

21-20.1 Maj. David P. Barrows' weekly intelligence summary, Sept. 15-21, 1918.

21-20.4 Intelligence Office summary of newspaper translations, Sept. 13, 1918.

21-20.7 Memorandum on towns within the Ugolnaya-Kangauz Sector and the Shkotovo Sector, Sept. 1919.

21-20.7 Intelligence report on the Siberian Front, Dec. 2, 1918.

21-20.7 Report on the Vladivostok to Irkutsk ordnance train, Oct. 8-Nov. 16, 1918.

21-20.7 Weekly intelligence report from Razdolnoe, Dec. 12, 1919.

21-20.7 Report on the Bolsheviks' policy in Razdolnoe, Jan. 13, 1920.

21-20.7 Reports of railroad traffic through Spasskoe, Sept.-Dec. 1919.

21-21.1 Reports on the activities of the Intelligence Section, July 1918-Feb. 1920.

21-21.3 Documents relating to "Civil Affairs" and diplomatic relations, July 6, 1918-May 22, 1919.

21-21.8 "Situation in Siberia." [Cross-reference sheets.]

21-23.11 Memorandums on the strength army organization of White Russian Forces, Oct.-Nov. 1918.

21-23.7 "The Czecho-Slovaks in Russia - August 1914 to February 1919," by Capt. Laurance B. Packard.

21-27.2 Instructions concerning the writing of intelligence reports, Sept. 2, 1919.

21-31 Lt. Col. G. Maitland Edwards' memorandum relative to proposed Allied military operations in Siberia (n.d., but probably spring of 1918).

21-32.16 Field messages relating to movements and operations of Allied units, Aug. 15, 1918-Mar. 7, 1919.

21-32.2 Map showing general distribution of Allied troops in Siberia (n.d.).

21-32.2 Description of troop dispositions in Vladivostok, the Suchan Mines, and Khabarovsk (n.d.).

21-32.2 "Distribution of Railway Guards." [Cross-reference sheets.]

21-32.6 Operations maps, Aug. 1919.

21-32.7 Orders received from Japanese Headquarters ("Allies Orders"), Aug. 26-Nov. 3, 1918.

21-33.5 War diaries of the AEF in Siberia Headquarters at Vladivostok, Aug. 7, 1918-Mar. 30, 1920.

21-33.5 War diaries of the 31st Infantry Replacement Battalion in the Shkotovo Sector, May 18-Oct. 31, 1919.

21-33.5 War diaries of the Allied Mine Guard, Suchan Sector, June 23-Aug. 2, 1919.

21-33.6 Maj. Gen. William S. Graves' report of operations of the AEF in Siberia, to June 30, 1919.

21-33.6 "An Account of the American Expeditionary Forces in Siberia, August 1918 to March 1919" by Capt. Laurance B. Packard.

21-33.6 Report of operations in the Spasskoe Sector, Jan. 1-June 30, 1919.

21-33.6 Report of operations of the 31st Infantry, Jan. 1-June 30, 1919.

21-33.6 Maps showing monthly stations of units of 31st Infantry, Jan.-June 1919.

21-33.6 Reports of elements of the 27th Infantry Regiment, Aug. 1918-June 1919.

21-33.6 Reports of operations of the Allied Mine Guard at Suchan, Oct. 1918-July 1919.

21-33.6 Final report of Maj. Gen. William S. Graves on the operations of AEF in Siberia, July 1, 1919-Mar. 30, 1920.

21-33.6 Maj. Earle W. Jennings' "History of the Suchan Campaign," June 22-July 18, 1919.

21-33.6 "Operations at Razdolnoe, Feb. 6-Mar. 8, 1919."

21-33.6 Post diary, Spasskoe, July 1-Sept. 1, 1919.

21-33.6 Reports of operations at Spasskoe, July 1-Dec. 31, 1919.

21-33.6 Report of operations in Shkotovo Sector, July 1- Dec. 31, 1919.

21-33.6 "Engagement at Uspanka." [Cross-reference sheets.]

21-33.6 Weekly reports of operations, Base and Line of Communications (31st Infantry), Sept. 14, 1918-May 8, 1919.

21-34.2 Report of Japanese interference with an American troop train at Nikolsk, Oct. 13-14, 1919.

21-37 Report of inspection of the narrow gauge railway beyond Fanza, Nov. 16, 1919.

21-42.2 Reports of operations of the Engineer Detachment, Aug. 16, 1918-Jan. 1, 1919; Jan. 1-June 30, 1919; and July 1-Dec. 31, 1919.

21-42.2 Report of American Railway Engineers with the Czecho-Slovaks in Siberia, May 5-Sept. 9, 1918.

21-42.22 Table of distances by railroad of all major Russian cities between Vladivostok and Petrograd expressed in versts (1 verst = .66 mile).

21-42.3 Brief note and newspaper clipping concerning the Allied agreement to guard the Trans-Siberian railway and the Russian Railway Service Corps, Feb. 12, 1919.

21-42.8 List of engineer supplies and equipment received by the AEF in Siberia, Aug. 1918-Feb. 1919.

21-43 Col. James S. Wilson's "Medical History of the Siberian Expedition," Aug. 1918-June 1919.

21-43 Chief Surgeon's reports-of operations during 1919.

21-43 History of the Veterinary Detachment.

21-43.3 Col. James S. Wilson's report on sanitary personnel, Aug. 1918-May 1919.

21-43.5 "Operations of the Dental Corps." [Cross-reference sheets.]

21-43.9 Report on medical supplies, Oct. 1, 1918-Feb. 5, 1919.

21-43.9 "Operations of the Hospital Laundry."

21-43.9 "Disbursing Office of the Medical Department."

21-44 Reports of Ordnance Department operations, Aug. 25, 1918-Dec. 31, 1919.

21-44 List of ordnance stores issued to troops of the AEF in Siberia, Aug. 15, 1918-Jan. 31, 1919.

21-45 Semiannual report of the Chief Signal Officer, July 1-Dec. 31, 1919.

21-45.6 Report of operations of the Signal Corps' Photographic Unit, Nov. 4, 1918-Jan. 9, 1919.

21-46 Reports of operations of the Quartermaster Corps, Aug. 15, 1918-Dec. 31, 1919.

21-46.3 Report on quartermaster property received and issued, Aug. 1918-Feb. 1919.

21-67.4 Reports of operations of the Judge Advocate General, Sept. 2, 1918-Dec. 31, 1919.

21-67.4 Final report of operations of the Judge Advocate General's Department, Jan. 1-Mar. 26, 1920.