

Non-Combatant Patches

Members of most World War I organizations such as the YMCA and Knights of Columbus, adopted uniforms that closely resembled army clothing, and some, such as newspaper correspondents, wore army uniforms. In World War II, things changed and this brief article is intended to provide the basics for some of the insignia used during World War II for personnel authorized to accompany the U. S. Army overseas. Some of these personnel were press reporters while others were technical specialists employed by the army.

As the U.S. Army expanded in 1941 the new army regulations issued that year addressed what noncombatants should wear. The August 1941 edition of AR 600-40 called for these personnel to wear one of two brassards (armbands) on the left sleeve above the elbow. Those “newspaper correspondents, photographers, broadcasters, their chauffeurs and messengers” were one class, while the other group was “civilian employees in forces of the Army of the United States in the theater of operations.”

AR 600-35, November 1941, prescribed media personnel have armbands with “the appropriate word” such as “correspondent,” “radio commentator,” and even “photographer messenger,” among others, in 1-1/4 inch high white block letters on a green, four-inch high brassard. The same regulation called for civilian employees, the second group, to have appropriate words in dark blue letters on a white background.

In 1941 and 42 uniforms for officers and enlisted men were very different. AR 600-40 called for civilian employees in the theater of operations to wear appropriate cotton or woolen uniforms, “as prescribed by the commanding general, without insignia; and a brassard as prescribed in AR 600-35.” Civilian newspaper correspondents, photographers, and radio news commentators attached to forces wore officer uniforms without collar insignia but with armband, while messengers and chauffeurs wore enlisted uniforms without insignia and with an armband.

In practice media personnel wore officer or enlisted uniforms, but usually without the brassards. Often they added a shoulder patch or a strip above the pocket embroidered “war correspondent” or something similar. Even so, the War Department and other headquarters struggled to prescribe uniforms and insignia for these personnel.

War Department Circular 71, March 9, 1942, changed the brassards for media personnel to just one of two: Correspondents, journalists, radio commentators, and similar personnel changed to a white block letter “C” on a green armband, while photographers switched to a similar 2-inch high armband with the letter “P.” I have seen several photos of these armbands being worn, but I have not seen an example of the initial brassards with the words written out in the prescribed colors. One example of the early 1942 armband being worn is shown (right).

Three weeks later, on March 28, War Department Circular 91 introduced the well-known large rectangle bearing the triangle and “US.” Four are shown on the next page. This dark blue and white insignia, 4-1/2 inches on a side, was for civilian War Department employees overseas, on their uniforms “as prescribed by the commanding general,” and was for civilians accompanying the military who had previously been prescribed the dark blue armbands with white letters. The two changes in



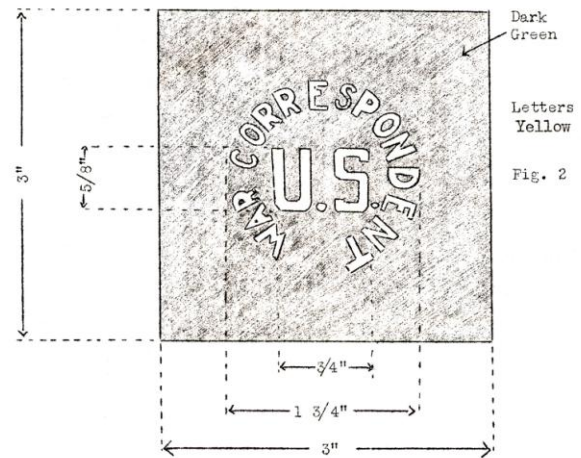
Circulars 71 and 91 were finally captured in AR 600-35 on September 4, 1942, in Changes No. 1.



In Europe General Eisenhower's staff finally published ETOUSA General Orders 28 on 18 August 1942 that prescribed civilian uniforms for the European Theater. This called for men to wear either the brassard or non-combatant insignia per circulars 71 and 91, while it called on female civilian chauffeurs to wear WAAC type-uniforms but with "enlisted quartermaster insignia." There was no mention of armbands for the ladies. Women associated with medical duties, such as dental hygienists and dietitians, were to have uniforms that would "conform as nearly as practicable to that prescribed for Army Nurses." Again there was no mention of armbands.

In April 1943 the headquarters for the European Theater of Operations, through General Orders 22, directed that War Department civilians turn in their uniforms unless they were "on operational flights" or "otherwise placed in imminent danger of capture by the enemy." Those personnel who might have exposure to the enemy continued to wear uniforms with the 4-1/2 inches non-combatant patch.

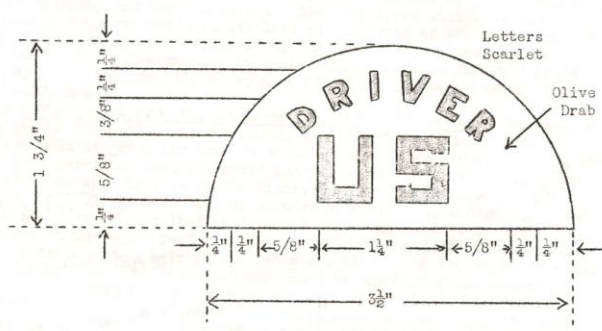
ETOUSA General Orders 22, 1943, discarded the brassards bearing "P" and "C" and created a new insignia to be worn on the left sleeve midway between the shoulder and the elbow. A picture of the dark green and yellow device, from General Order 22, is shown on the right. This same order directed women chauffeurs to wear a newly created OD and red shoulder patch on their uniform.



Like the new War Correspondent patch, these were issued without cost by the European Theater

to those entitled to wear them. An example is shown on the left. General Order 28, 1943, made slight modifications to GO 22, but the insignia created and shown remained unchanged. If collectors have not seen actual examples before, they should be cautious of buying them now, as fakers will make them.

The War Department finally prescribed the set of smaller well-known non-combatants patches, with blue colored designs and words, all on khaki, in November 1944, through



Changes 2 to AR 600-40. This same change also directed civilians to wear the metal "U.S." on the collar and on the garrison cap, and allowed those having the assimilated rank of an officer, to wear the officer's cap insignia on the service cap. Two examples of these 1944 style patches are shown. These colors of the light and dark khaki are the main differences, although the US is



embroidered on one version, while with the other the US is made simply by not embroidering the blue triangle. The army authorized a range of wording on these patches and that wording changed over time, but always

with the caveat that the plain version without any specialist designation could also be used.

Examples made in the 1980s and later with merrow edges also exist, as at the right. After the advent of the desert BDUs, regulations called for civilians to wear the WW II style khaki version (right), on that uniform.



With the advent of subdued insignia, regulations changed the non-combatant insignia, which became named "insignia for civilians," to an olive-green background with black triangle and wording, which lasted in regulations into the early 21st Century. These could go on the fatigues or on woodland BDUs. An example of a subdued patch for these two uniforms is shown below (left).



A recent but unauthorized overseas-made version for the US Air Force is also shown above, right, with a large tab below.



With the small Velcro rank insignia worn on the chest, the army adopted similar versions for civilians to put on Army Combat Uniforms (ACU), as shown. This ended the non-combatant shoulder patches.