

World War I Blue, Silver, and Gold Army Service Chevrons

The army authorized gold, silver, and blue V shaped chevrons for wear on the lower sleeves during and after World War I. The gold chevrons for wounds went on the lower right sleeve. Gold, silver, and blue chevrons for service went on the left sleeve.

Wound insignia: Before the gold colored V chevron on the right sleeve, the army prescribed a short-lived ribbon that was never used. On December 29, 1917, Changes Number 1 to Special Regulations Number 42 prescribed a ribbon, 1-1/2 inches long and worn on the chest, to represent wounds. This short lived and never made ribbon was equally divided into 1/2 inch red, white, and blue sections. War Department General Orders Number 6, dated January 12, 1918 rescinded this ribbon and substituted in its place the well known gold wound chevrons on the lower right sleeve. The Purple Heart replaced the gold wound chevron starting in 1932.

The same January 12, 1918, order also prescribed the gold V chevron for the lower left sleeve wore wear on by personnel “in the zone of advance.” This showed the insignia was intended only for soldiers in the combat area. Considering both the wound chevron and the service chevron, the gold V became an ornament that indicated the wearer was in combat. At this time no device yet existed for those in rear areas. These and other lower sleeve chevrons have two inch arms meeting at 90 degrees.



In May 1918, War Department General Orders 53 eliminated the requirement for service in the zone of advance, and retroactively allowed a gold “V” chevron for the left sleeve by anyone in the “theater of operations” for each 6 months. “Old timers” wore one or more of the gold chevrons on the left sleeve. WD General Orders 53, 1918, also established a single blue chevron for the lower left sleeve of soldiers in the theater of operations who had not yet served 6 months. Now every soldier in the France, England, Italy, and anywhere

in the war area had some device on the lower left sleeve to show service. In May 1919 the War Department decided to count the time overseas from the day of departure from the US, while previously the time was started when a soldier landed in Europe.

AEF Bulletin Number 10, dated February 8, 1918, established *The Stars and Stripes* as the official newspaper of the AEF. The eight page paper was published each Friday, from February 8, 1918 through June 13, 1919. Issue number 3, February 22, 1918, had an article stating that to wear a wound chevron, a soldier had to be given a letter of authorization by either the army’s adjutant general or by the AEF commander, and that soldiers who previously had been wounded could request authorization for a wound chevron by forwarding “available evidence” to the



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army's adjutant general. Units created a great many different pieces of paper showing such authorization.



The question arose what could be worn by those military personnel still in the United States who wanted to serve overseas. These included professional military men but they were stuck in the United States training new soldiers. Some means was needed to show that these men had been serving for some time. As a result, War Department General Orders 122, dated December 1918, created a silver chevron of the same size and pattern as the gold and blue chevrons. One could be worn for each 6 months service during the world war, for time in the US.

There was a clear hierarchy for these left sleeve service chevrons: silver were the lowest ranking and could not be worn by anyone entitled to wear either a single blue chevron or for anyone entitled to wear gold chevrons(s). The next rung was the single blue chevron, showing less than 6 months in the theater of operations. Anyone with more than six months service was to wear a gold chevron for each 6 months in the theater of operations. Thus World War I uniforms should exist only with one or more silver chevrons, one blue chevron, or one or more gold chevrons.

While combinations of gold and silver chevrons are found on some uniforms, they were clearly unauthorized. War Department General Orders 123 of 1919 stated that no time after October 4, 1919, would count towards any of these chevrons, except for service in Siberia and service in the Army of Occupation. This accounts for soldiers wearing four or even five service chevrons—most commonly they were earned by soldiers in the World War I Army of Occupation, which lasted until 1923.



The May 2, 1919, edition of the *Stars and Stripes* lists four men in the AEF who were entitled to wear 4 gold chevrons. These included Colonel C. W. Exton, who was military attaché to Switzerland when the war started. Other officers overseas when the war started, and still in France at that time, were Brigadier General Frank Parker and USMC Colonel Sanford Wadhams. The paper noted that several hospital units landed in France in May 1917, and personnel in those units would soon be entitled to 4 gold service chevrons.

The War Department published the initial edition of Army Regulation Number 600-35 in October 1921, replacing the old Special Regulation 42 with its many changes. When this happened, the silver service chevron was no longer mentioned. The overseas blue and the gold chevrons remained in many insignia regulations until 1966 when Army Regulation 670-5 failed to mention them. To the left is an illustration and caption taken from Army Regulation 670-5, dated 28 September 1959.



Figure 91.
Overseas service
and wound
chevrons, World
War I.